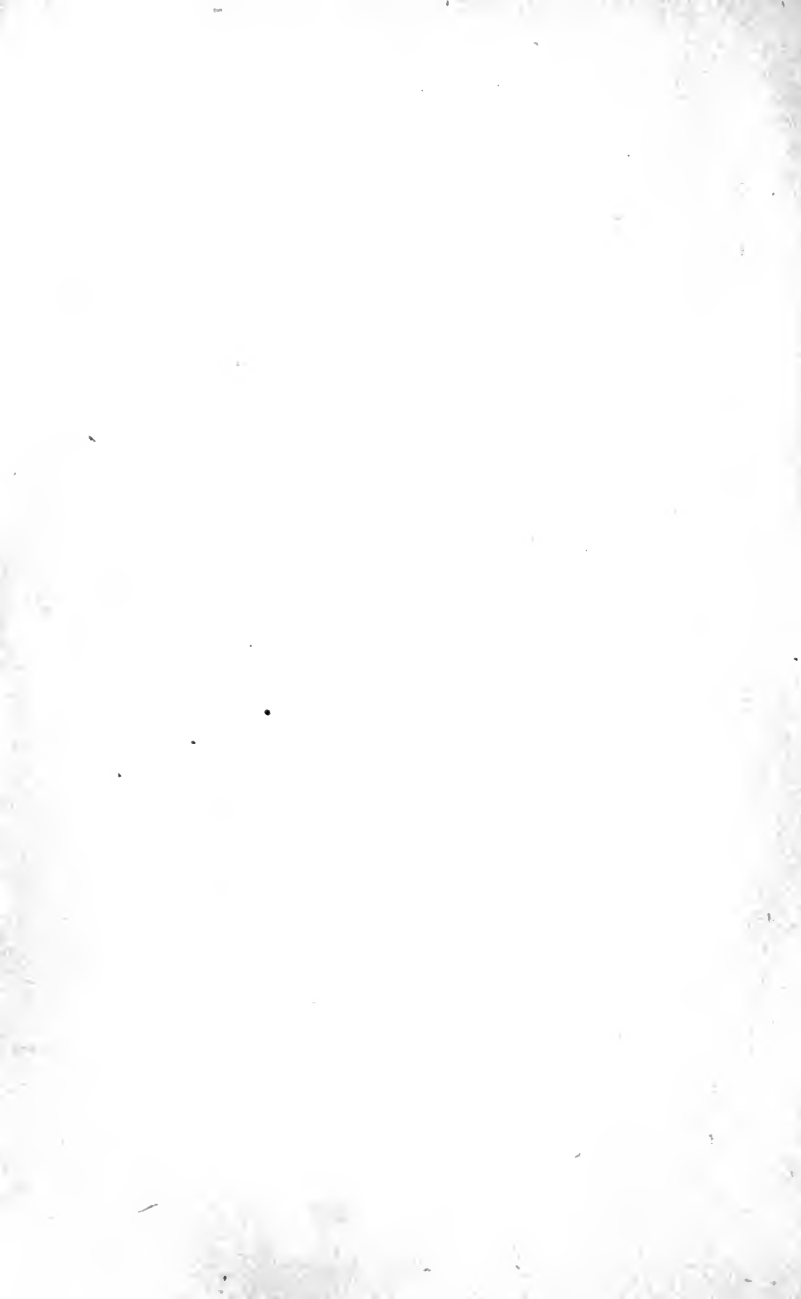




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THE STRANGER



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TORONTO

THE STRANGER

BY

ARTHUR BULLARD

Author of

"A Man's World," "Comrade Yetta," "The
Barbary Coast," "The Russian
Pendulum," etc.

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1920

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From a dialogue between Alcuin of York, Philosopher-in-ordinary to Charlemagne, and Pepin, the Emperor's son.

Pepin: "What is Life?"

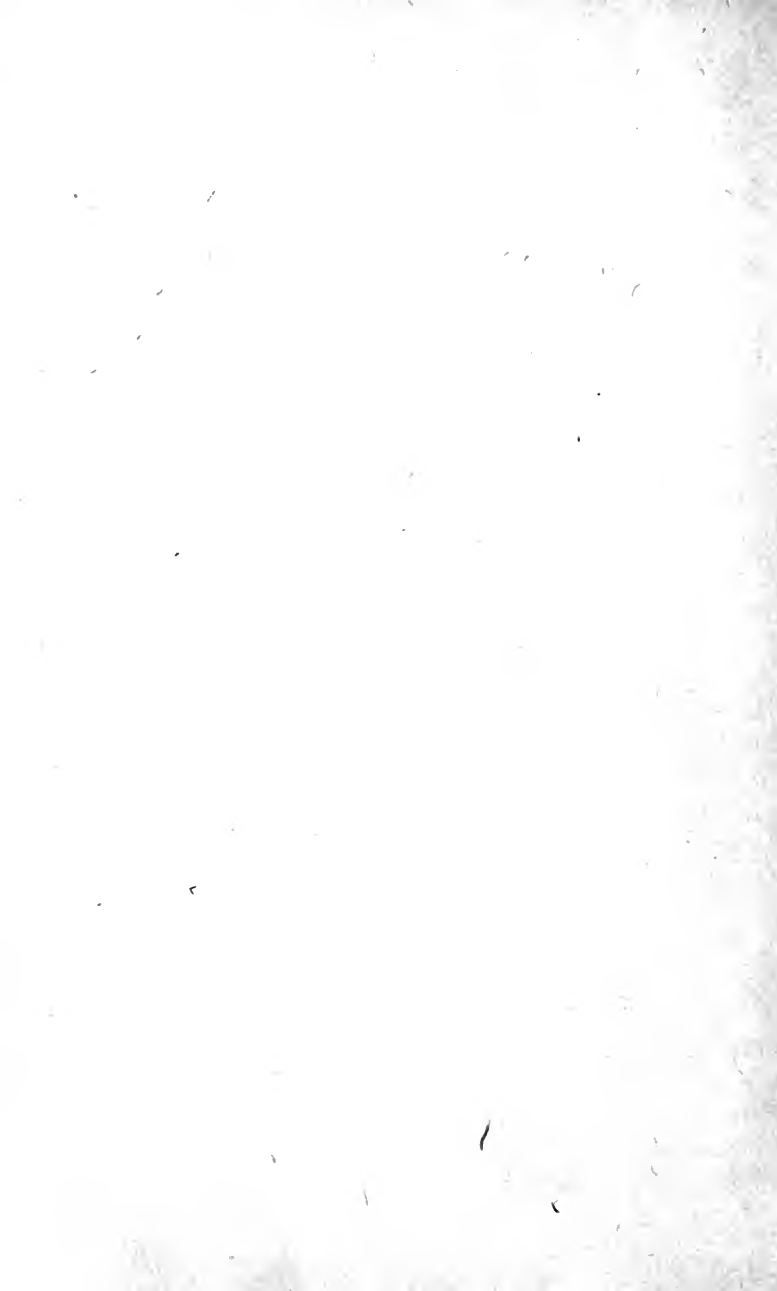
Alcuin: "The joy of the Happy—
The Expectation of Death."

Pepin: "What is Death?"

Alcuin: "An inevitable Event—an uncertain Journey—
Tears for the Living—the Thief of Man."

Pepin: "What is Man?"

Alcuin: "The Slave of Death—
A passing Traveler—
A Stranger in his own abode."



THE STRANGER

CHAPTER I

THE STRANGER IS ANNOUNCED

"Wasn't Eunice well enough to come to-night?"

There was a note of affectionate concern in Frank Lockwood's voice as he asked about the missing guest.

"Yes," Lillian, his wife, echoed, somewhat more perfunctorily. "How is Eunice?"

Although the table had been set for six, there were but two guests, Helen Cash and Winslow Mathews. Helen, who shared an apartment with Eunice Bender, answered, and her voice, which was ordinarily resonant and assured, sounded dreary.

"Nothing serious. No better, no worse. She had a wrangle with the printer this afternoon and was too tired to come out again."

Eunice was so dear to them all that a constraint and silence fell on them for a moment. Lillian was the first to break it.

"Pete," she said, "telegraphed at the last minute that he had to stay in Albany."

This started the conversation on the prospects of getting some reform bills through the legislature in this 1913 session. It was this work which had kept Peter McGee from joining them. It interested Helen

very intimately in her own work. "Win" Mathews, who was McGee's close friend and roommate, was also deeply interested. Frank, who was an artist, less so, and Lillian not at all.

It was a tiny dining room, quite full with the four of them — it would have been crowded with six. When the house had been built a couple of generations ago, this room had been planned as a "back parlor." In those prosperous days, when the district had been fashionable, the large room behind had been the dining room, but when Frank and Win had come to the city together, ten years earlier, they had found the house crowded with a dozen Italian families. These had been dispossessed, and Frank had turned the original dining room into a studio.

This little room where they sat had only one window, looking out on a narrow air shaft, but it was amply supplied with doors — double, sliding doors, fore and aft, leading into the parlor and studio, and a single door, opposite the obscured window, into the hallway. Its very smallness rendered it cozy and intimate, and it was made gay by some oils on the wall — sketches by some of Frank's friends. There was none of his work there.

The table, set very formally, in an uptown, conventional way — a manner obviously inspired by the popular fashion magazines — seemed out of tune with the Bohemian setting. So did the hostess. Lillian was beautiful. She was beautifully gowned, for the advice of her artist husband more than offset the slenderness of her dress allowance. There was a touch of *grande-dame* formality, a certain queenli-

ness, in her manner of presiding which was in sharp contrast to the easy intimacy of the other three.

Helen Cash did not have this attraction of beauty. She was rather above the medium in all dimensions, but not in the least cumbersome. Her movements were a shade too precise to be gracious. But while she was not at all pretty, she caught and held attention. She was more of a person than Lillian. She had a real, if less obvious, appeal. She would have done very well as a model for a "Victory" or "The Spirit of the Republic." She had least charm at close quarters.

This was also true of her voice. It was a committee voice. It could read a report, cite statistics, state a policy with persuasive force. It sounded best from halfway back in a large hall, but it was a trifle over-loud for intimate badinage.

In her world Helen was a great success. She was financial secretary — which means money raiser — of the National Association for Labor Legislation. She was one of the most highly paid women in social service work. She had "made good." Pete McGee had nicknamed her "Spot Cash."

Frank Lockwood did not dress like a genius, for Lillian insisted on a certain degree of neatness. Only his hair — which the winds had blown about too much for any reform — had escaped her control. His first love had been the sea, and New Ipswich, Maine, where he had spent his youth, where his ancestors had lived for generations, had left its mark on him. There was the gray of the misty northern sea in his eyes.

His eyes were what made every one love him. People who had never heard his name were affected by them. His eyes had done the trick for Win Mathews, had pulled him out of the cultured shelter of Boston Back Bay into a world of tense emotions and stark realism. They had won the ill-tempered, dishonest, drunken old woman who had been their laundress, and changed her into a devoted slave. They had drawn Lillian from another planet into a strange, gypsy world where she could never be at home.

They were sad eyes, for they had seen beauty and now had to look at other things. There was a picture of his, "Moonlight on the Maine Sea," in the Corcoran at Washington, his portrait of Lillian in the Metropolitan, and a mural piece in the Luxembourg. A few years ago all the world of art critics were waiting eagerly for his next picture. But now he had a contract as an illustrator at five thousand a year. He was supporting his wife.

Pete McGee said he never could remember whether Win was thirty-six or sixty-three—it depended on which side of his face you were talking about. At thirty, Win's hair in a one-sided way had begun to turn gray. His left eyebrow now was almost white. It had a bizarre effect, which arrested attention. It seemed as if premature old age had brought an almost flippant gaiety and sparkle to this side of his face, while the other eye was plodding along in the pursuit of knowledge as a respectable eye should do.

Mathews' novels, all about the life of New York—there was a string of six of them—were attracting more and more readers. The first one had sold about

five thousand, the last one had reached twenty thousand, and his new one was running as a serial. He had none of the erratic temperament of his friend, Lockwood. Lillian would not have had any trouble with his hair; it was naturally orderly. The flame which burned within him was less brilliant than his friend's but more steady.

His manner was easy, almost too casual. He was so deeply interested in everybody else that he had no self-consciousness — and a certain self-consciousness is, after all, the basis of good manners. Most people found him hard to get acquainted with and, too easily discouraged, called him unresponsive or even rude. But those who persevered and reached through to intimacy found him every time better than when they had left him last.

From bills before the legislature in Albany, the discussion had come, with the dessert, to municipal politics. Lillian was bored. She was relieved when the meal was over and she could shift her guests into the parlor and superintend the placing of the coffee tray on an exquisite — but secondhand — directoire serving table.

"Frank," Helen said, for in spite of Lillian's striking beauty, these friends generally addressed themselves to her husband, "every time I see that coffee set, I fall more in love with it."

Lillian, busy with the pouring, did not follow the conversation. She was vexed with Helen for admiring these funny, old-fashioned, lusterware coffee things at this moment, for she was planning to persuade Frank to buy a new set more like her mother's.

At last her father's inventions had begun to make money and her parents were on the highroad to riches; they had moved to the Drive. Her mother had a solid silver coffee pot, gold-washed inside. She wondered if Helen's admiration of this lusterware would be so outspoken if she had known that Frank had bought it, almost for nothing, in a pawnshop.

This was the principal puzzle of life to her. Why did Frank and his friends value so many frayed, soiled, secondhand things? She liked things that were smart and new and costly. Many people who came to see her went into raptures over the little house, praising it because it was old. To her mind it was tiny, so inconspicuous, so almost shabby.

To be sure, the house had been thoroughly renovated at the time of her marriage, but this glorious restoration had not come to the district as a whole. A few neighboring houses had been redeemed by other artists, a few new tenements, dignified by the name of apartment houses, had been built, but nobody could pretend that it was a fashionable part of town. Although Frank and his friends liked the district, she wanted to move.

When she proposed it, Frank always asked an irrelevant question, about where in thunder had she hid his blue tie, or what were they going to have for dinner.

"My dear," he would say, when she insisted, as she always did, "we simply can't afford to move uptown on five thousand a year. Where did you say you'd put that tie?"

It was one of half a dozen subjects on which Frank

was adamant. She could not charm him, nor tease him, nor distress him into changing. While Lillian would admit quite freely to her mother, more guardedly to other married women, that Frank was not the perfectly docile husband, she had a proper pride which made her hide from any unmarried woman — Helen for instance — her dissatisfactions. She held her head high.

She sat in the stiff Gothic chair in which Frank had painted her. There were other chairs which she found more comfortable, but he had said that this one became her best and, uncertain of her own taste, she always trusted his. But being beautiful loses half its charm among people who are familiar with your beauty.

"If you people are through with politics," she broke in at the first opening, "I want to discuss Thanksgiving. We can't give up our annual picnic. Whom shall we invite?"

"Why, the same old crowd, of course," Helen said.

"We haven't got enough men, now that Pete has deserted."

"There's Lancaster and Frank and Win."

"But," Lillian insisted, "there are four of us girls."

"Of course, it's never sure about Eunice," Helen said. "She may not be up to a party."

"We must have her," Frank said emphatically, "if she's not feeling fit, we'll spend the day in the flat — or postpone the fiesta. We must have her. There's no hope of Pete?"

"No," Win groaned, with business of wiping away tears, "he's lashed to the mast."

"Isn't it fierce the way the old gang is breaking up," Frank said. "Remember how keen Mary always was on our sticking together! 'Just for a lapful of baby she left us; just for a husband to flaunt in our face.'"

"You started the stampede," Win remarked dryly.

"But, Win," Helen said, to steer out of dangerous waters, "you must know some men."

"Dozens of them, hundreds of them. But none who would quite fit. Thanksgiving Day should be a reunion of old pals. It's an unlucky day to make new acquaintances."

"You or Frank have got to find some one," Lillian said; "it don't much matter who. I've got a gorgeous idea. Generally we gave a theater party on Thanksgiving. But we ought to have some variety. Everything is Oriental these days. The Russian ballet — those plays, 'Mecca' and 'The Caliph's Daughter.' Let's make it a Persian supper. Let's have a contrast — fancy dress — an Arabian Nights' Entertainment on good old Puritan Thanksgiving Day!"

Win jumped up and snapped his fingers.

"I've an idea!"

"A man?"

"Yes. A regular man. He's Oriental enough. His name is Lane — Donald Lane — a queer chap. He has the apartment across the hall from our diggings. He's been there for six months or more. It's the old story — next door in New York is as far off as Patagonia. I've often passed him in the hallway, but we never spoke till recently.

“Weird people come to see him — Orientals — the way Russian refugees camp on Lancaster’s doorstep—— A few weeks ago I ran into him going down in the elevator; he had two of them with him — tall, gaunt men, with great turbans, white robes, flowing beards — talking some outlandish, guttural language. He put them in a taxi at the door. ‘Who are your friends?’ I asked. ‘Moors,’ he said — just like that — without any explanation, as though it were the simplest thing in the world. We walked over to Broadway together. He told me that he was the secretary of some Oriental society.

“After that I kept an eye on him. There’s a young fellow living with him. He wears ordinary clothes and a red fez — a Turk, I imagine. About a month ago I came home late one night — Pete was up at Albany — and was greeted by the strangest music I ever heard — weird but beautiful. I could not guess the instrument. At first it sounded like a flute, but there were some full cello notes and now and then a heart-piercing, high, violin note. It sounded just outside my window.

“I tiptoed across the room and looked out — the queerest sight this little old New York ever produced! This chap, Lane, was sitting cross-legged on the fire escape, staring up at the faintest new moon, working a barbaric fiddle. There was a round drum-head, like a banjo, and a short neck. Instead of strings there was a wisp of horsehair; he fingered this and sawed across it with a bow of one string. It was just the reverse of our violin. And even as

I watched him, I would have sworn that some of the notes came from a reed.

“When he saw me he was mightily embarrassed — hoped his noise had not disturbed me. I crawled out on the balcony and looked at the instrument. It was a beautiful piece of craftsmanship, all chased with elaborate arabesques and inlaid with gold and ivory. He told me its name, which begins with three r’s and ends with three b’s — with hardly any vowels in between. I asked him what tune he was playing and he said it wasn’t a tune, just something he made up as he went along. ‘It’s the first beautiful night I’ve seen in New York. The moon makes the buildings across the Square look a little like mountains,’ he said, by way of explanation — as if that were sufficient excuse for sitting out on the fire escape and serenading the moon on an inverted, heathen fiddle!

“I asked him where his home was, and he seemed surprised. Apparently the idea of having a home had never occurred to him. So I asked some questions about music, and he opened up at once and invited me inside his window. Oriental music and poetry seem to be his specialty. He did not talk much about himself, but I gathered that he had traveled all over the East. He spoke familiarly of Samarkand, Ispahan, Cashmere, and places like that.

“At last I put my foot in it by saying that I liked the Rubaiyat. He flared up at that. Omar, it seems, was a lightweight — a minor poet among the Persians. And Fitzgerald, he said, had mistranslated him shamefully. The quatrain about ‘Man’s forgiveness ask — and take’ offended him most. ‘Not even a

wine drinker like Omar,' he said, 'would have written such a blasphemy.' He seemed to think that any one who liked the Rubaiyat was a lowbrow — hardly worth talking to.

"I did not see him again for some time, but a few days ago he suddenly forgave my literary tastes, knocked at my door, and asked if I liked Turkish cigarettes. He gave me a handful — the best I've ever smoked. He said a friend of his makes them, and I ordered a couple of hundred. They're unbelievably cheap — I'll send you some.

"I don't know anything about him, except what I've told you. He's a queer one. But he's intelligent, really erudite, I judge, in his specialty. He's painfully shy — seems to want to be friendly and not quite certain how it's done. I guess he's a solitary chap — unused to company. I don't suppose that he'd fit in very well — generally — probably knows nothing and cares less about the things we're keen on. But if Lillian wants an Oriental spread, he might help.

"I tell you what. Come to breakfast Sunday. We haven't had one of our old-fashioned, Sunday breakfasts since Pete fell by the wayside. I'll invite Lane, and you can all look him over. If he passes the examination, Lillian can ask him to dinner and get acquainted. Yes? No?"

After a little more discussion and repeated assurances from Win that this was all he knew about the Stranger, they played a few rubbers of bridge.

After eleven the party broke up, and Win walked home with Helen.

"It's funny about Lillian," she said, "I haven't sized her up yet. Still — after all these years — she seems an outsider. It startles me when she says 'us girls.' Somehow I never think of her as one of 'us.'"

"She never will be," Win said bitterly.

"I wonder why I don't like her more. She's so beautiful! Every time I see her, I'm surprised again — she's breath-taking."

"Oh, Frank arranges that. He's stage manager. If he didn't design her clothes, she'd look like a chorus girl."

"Come, come!" Helen laughed. "She is beautiful. You must admit that, even if you don't like her."

"Well, perhaps she is — but I dislike her just the same. I know it's jealousy — of course, I'm jealous. Ten years and more Frank and I chummed together, then she butted in. And besides, it rumples up my aura to hear her say, 'It don't' and 'I have got.'"

"Frank seems contented."

"What's that to do with it?" Win demanded savagely. "What's happiness compared to what he's given up? He wasn't only *a* painter, he was *the* painter — the pure essence — and now he's an illustrator! What's happiness — a pretty wife to kiss — compared with the place he held — and the promise? He used to be a rare soul and now he's a meal ticket! It's a crime! And besides I'm not so sure that he is happy."

They had come to the door of Helen's apartment.

"You ought to know better than to start me think-

ing about Lillian at this time of night," Win growled. "Now I'll go to bed with a grouch."

"Well, to change the subject, how about this Stranger? You think we'll like him?"

"I don't take any responsibility. It's up to you people to decide. I said Thanksgiving is an unlucky day to make new acquaintances."

"We'll see," Helen said. "He sounds interesting. I'm curious about him. Good night."

"Good night," Win called back from the sidewalk, as Helen let herself in with her latchkey. "Love to Eunice. Tell her I'll expect her Sunday morning. We'll need her advice about this Stranger."

CHAPTER II

EUNICE BENDER

There was a silent and mysterious tragedy back of Eunice Bender. Nature had condemned her mother's stock — the Ripley family was dying out. It was a strange matter, for they had always held an honored place among their neighbors; their passing, one by one, had been mourned by the whole community. We would expect nature to cherish a breed so generally beloved. But at some time, in some unknown way, some obscure law of life had been violated. The verdict was plain.

Eunice's mother and her sister, Mrs. Clarkeson, were the only two of that generation — and it had been a large family — who had grown to maturity. Mrs. Bender had died in childbirth, and Mrs. Clarkeson had not entirely escaped the family sentence, for she and her large brood of children were "sickly."

Eunice's memories of her father were slight, for he had been killed in a railroad accident when she was five, and even before that she had been taken into the Clarkeson family. Her uncle, Mr. Clarkeson, was town clerk and had no further ambitions nor aptitudes, so her small income from the insurance money not only had to meet her own expenses, but also helped to pay his chronic debts. In this cheerless atmosphere Eunice had grown up.

As no one had expected her to live so long, she had had no formal education. Being always considered too frail to do anything, they had left her free to do what she pleased. And the thing which had pleased her most was to draw pictures of her young cousins. To persuade them to sit still, while she sketched them, she told them stories, which often, half unconsciously, twisted themselves into rhythm and rhyme.

Even in this hobby of drawing, she had no instruction — there were no teachers of such things in the village of West Newleigh. There were not even any noteworthy pictures to learn from. The half tones in the magazines were her only approach to art. So often too weak to be about, never strong enough for a scramble in the woods, she had not even been able to come to close quarters with the beauty of nature. The flowers in the Clarkesons' yard were few and scraggly. They kept chickens. And the children preferred cats to wild birds.

The one bright spot in this dismal existence was Helen Cash. Her parents lived next door, and the two girls had been friends from earliest childhood. But chronic invalidism had kept Eunice at home, when Helen fared forth to school.

Helen's college had been near by. She lived at home, going to her classes by trolley, and so was able to "look in" on Eunice every day. It was not any motive of good works, of "visiting the sick and in prison," which brought her. She liked Eunice. Too healthy herself ever to take note of it, she found a strange appeal in her friend's weakness. The Clarkson family was shiftless, and the house, overfull

of children, was none too orderly. But somehow Eunice's room was always bright — a place to which it was a privilege to come.

We carry with us type pictures of those we love, composites of all our memories, in which only the salient and significant things stand out. Sometimes, of course, Eunice would be up and about, but in Helen's picture she was always in her narrow white bed. There was as motif an orchidlike fragility, an other-worldly loveliness, and for dominants, the haunting beauty of great eyes and two amazing braids of golden hair — hair that Melisande would have envied.

Generally, when Helen "looked in," the children were about, and Eunice's fine, long hands were busy cutting out paper dolls for them or drawing pictures to illustrate the story she was telling. The youngsters always disappeared when Helen came. It was for this, more than anything else, that she pitied Eunice — having to spend so much time with children.

When they had gone, Eunice would turn to Helen those great eyes inquiringly. There were always questions in them: "How does it feel to be really alive?" "What is the world outside like?" And Helen, seated on the foot of the bed, would tell her all about life. At the age of ten, she had explained the universe to Eunice from the point of view of the West Newleigh Grammar School. After she went to college, her discourses took on a more academic tone. But always — even at ten — Helen had been quite sure of her judgments, and it had never occurred to Eunice to question them.

So, although her outlook on life was limited, Eunice knew Helen's life with unusual intimacy. She was ever an approving audience, which made it easy for Helen to talk, to recount all her adventures, to tell — everything.

Eunice had heard in detail of the tribulations of freshmen. She had been told how the dogmatic religion of the village Sunday school had come to grief under scrutiny from the scientific point of view. She had been told about the men who danced with Helen, and those who wanted to go on dancing. Helen had been proposed to twice and had confided all the details. Eunice had learned a very precise and vigorous formula of refusal. She had also read the despairing letters of the rejected suitors.

Eunice had much time to read, in the long evenings after the children were a-bed, and she had studied all of Helen's textbooks, had played, not unsuccessfully, with her examination papers. As she had to puzzle her way through all this without a teacher, some of this long-distance education sank into her mind more durably than into Helen's.

Above all, she had learned from Helen a familiarity with the modern feminist attitude toward life. Helen would have to earn her living when she finished college. Her father was the village doctor, the Pennsylvanian countryside was healthy, and there were other children to educate. Helen, far from being dejected by this prospect, gloried in it. She believed in the "economic independence of women."

Mrs. Cash had planned that Helen should teach in the village high school, but Helen had other plans.

"I won't stay in West Newleigh," she said to Eunice, "teaching things that bore me to children who aren't interested — waiting for some man to marry me! No, I want to do something worth while."

Merely "earning a living" was too meager a goal for her ambitions. She wanted to do it largely and splendidly, not only for herself and her own comfort, but also as a demonstration — on behalf of womanhood. The field of activity which she had chosen for herself was "Social Service," what an earlier generation called "Philanthropy." "Municipal House-keeping" and phrases from Mrs. Gilman's "Woman and Economics" were always on her lips. Here were large opportunities for women. "It's a new frontier," she told Eunice; "there is a demand for social pioneers."

In the Easter vacation of her senior year, Helen went on a voyage of adventure to New York, and she brought back to Eunice the great news that she had found a job. It was an investigation into the uses and abuses of employment agencies. She was to begin work as soon as she left college and she was to live in a settlement on Second Avenue.

Eunice was in bed, when Helen brought this news. She had expected it. Helen wanted to go and Helen always got her way. Eunice knew how marvelous the opening seemed to her friend. Of course she was glad about it, and yet — She had to clinch her hands very tightly under the bedclothes not to spoil Helen's joy by letting her see how gloomy and very lonely life would be in West Newleigh without her.

"Tell me about New York," she said to avoid the unpleasant thought.

"Oh, Eunice, I can't — it's too wonderful! The women in the Settlement are real people — modern. Every one hard at work at something that counts. I had a long talk with Mrs. Gilman; she's every bit as good as her books. She fixed up this job for me. It'll be a stepping-stone to other work — better and more worth-while. There are a dozen girls at the Settlement, all interesting. The ones I liked best were Irene Penton and Mary Dutton, a kindergartner and a trained nurse. They're only a few years older than I, but already they've made a reputation for themselves. Between them, they've cut down the rate of infant mortality in the district — so that everybody is talking about it. Doctors come from all over — even from Europe — to study their methods. Now they're working for a maternity hospital. It must be wonderful to do things like that — to be somebody. They're individuals. They have real lives — personalities of their own.

"The men they introduced me to are just as fine. All of them have some real achievements to their credit. There is an artist, Frank Lockwood, who — they say — is very good. And a novelist, who lives with him, Winslow Mathews. I've brought down one of his books for you to read. It's about a Settlement — a good story. I liked him very much. Then there's a professor of ethnology, from Columbia, Lancaster. I did not see much of him, but they say he's awfully clever. And a funny Irishman named McGee.

He's always laughing and joking, but they all think highly of him. I didn't quite understand what he does — it's something in connection with the legislature in Albany.

"The finest thing is the way the men treat the women — as equals, comrades. No silly flirting. They're not solemn; they're serious. You see they're all hard at work — on something important, something that counts. They're the kind of people I want for my friends. And now I've the chance to live with them, to work with them. It's perfectly wonderful. My dream's come true."

For an hour or more she sat there on the foot of Eunice's bed, telling about these new friends, about her new work. The rush of her talk, hot, hastily phrased pictures of the city, quick, incisive descriptions of people, bewildered Eunice. How fatiguing it must be, she thought, to be really alive, to have such thrilling experiences.

And Helen's recital was thrilling, for there is a note more stirring than that of triumph — it was all about glorious beginnings. There is always something poignant and moving in the hopes of starting out. The Song of Victory is never so thrilling as "*Le chant du départ*." And Helen's talk of New York was a pæan to battles yet to win.

So life had led Eunice — drearily — through a quarter of a century. The only high lights had been furnished by this friend, who had advantage. Helen was a forth-faring person utterly undaunted, and Eunice attributed these qualities to health. It had never occurred to her that a well person might be

a coward. "Courage" and "health" she thought meant the same thing. And so she could not think of herself, so pitifully ill, as heroic. But the Great God Himself, if He took notice, must have admired, almost envied, her courage as she faced this new misery of loneliness after Helen's departure. The long, monotonous days and nights were so dismally uniform that even the occasional spells of pain were a relief. "Oh, I'll write — often," Helen had said; "of course, I'll write all about it." So the postman became the great personage in Eunice's life.

But from the very first, Helen's letters were irregular — there was such a swirl of things to do in New York! It had been so much easier to "look in" than it was to find time to write. One week there was only a postcard, with a picture of Brooklyn Bridge and a penciled line, "Too rushed to write."

Helen did her best to keep up the correspondence. Now and then something, which less valiant people might have called "homesickness," overtook her and she wrote at length to Eunice. In this manner the stay-at-home became acquainted with Helen's work and her new friends.

There was a long letter about the maternity hospital. It was to be the keystone in the arch which Helen's two best friends were building. Frank Lockwood had drawn some "stunning" posters for it. Win Mathews had "handled the publicity." Pete McGee had pulled wires till the Board of Estimate had apportioned some city funds for its upkeep. And there was a great deal about how Helen, over and above her regular job, which she described

as "very easy," helped to raise money for the building.

"Raising money," it soon developed, was Helen's forte. When the Investigation of Employment Agencies was finished, she became financial secretary for a "Deaf and Dumb Asylum," which had fallen into a rut and was being outstripped in the scramble for alms by newer and brisker organizations. She wrote a good deal about this job.

"It's the first really important work I've had; it gives me a chance." She mailed Eunice some of the "literature" she was sending out, and told in detail of the expedients and maneuvers by which she drew renewed attention to this neglected institution. "It's queer. The Charity Organization Society has done a lot to work out efficient methods to distribute relief, but as far as I can see, nobody has used much brains on raising money. Most of the charities stick to the old-fashioned practice of sending out printed or mimeographed — impersonal — circulars to a big mailing list on the chance that one out of ten will bring in a small check. Eighty per cent. of the income of this asylum came in dribblets of five or ten dollars. I believe in direct personal appeals; it's a lot more efficient. There are a great many rich people who suffer from deafness — I go after them. Already, I've brought in twenty checks for five hundred and two for a thousand. Everybody seems surprised, but it's only common sense."

Once every year Helen came home for Christmas, and these were red-letter occasions for Eunice. "There are so many things," Helen said, "that it's

hard to write about." One of these subjects was Pete McGee. His name had occurred frequently in her letters, especially after she had left the Deaf and Dumb Asylum for work with the Child Labor Committee, in which he also was interested. This new work threw them constantly together. At first, Helen had been enthusiastic about him, but in a letter a few weeks before one of her visits home, she had written that he had proposed to her. She had given no details and her only comment was "I'm sick about it."

"Yes," she said, when Eunice brought up the subject, "it did make me sick. I'd put him on such a high plane. He's not clever like Win, nor so intellectual as Lancaster; but in so many ways he's more effective than either of them—he gets things done! I like him—a lot! And now he goes and spoils everything by trying to make love to me—just like an ordinary man.

"Of course I stopped him as soon as I understood, but he's always joking and it's hard to know when he's in earnest. I really was surprised—and not a bit pleased. It was so fine working together, a frank, free friendship—never thinking about such things. Now, I'll always have to be on my guard. How I hate it!"

In this secondhand acquaintance, Eunice had been most interested in the artist, Frank Lockwood; she wanted most to hear about him.

"Everybody likes Frank," Helen said, "more, I guess, than I do. They say he's a wonderful painter, but it all seems sort of ineffectual to me. I wish I

knew more about such things. 'Art' seems to me so indefinite, so hard to value. The others think it is very important, but I can't see that it gets anywhere. I can't find any standard to judge it by. People rave over one picture and despise another and I don't understand why. I suppose I haven't any taste. But Frank must be clever, people who pretend to know say he's a genius. He's won a lot of prizes. His last one — Win says it's his best — was bought by a banker named Baldwin. He has done some amusing Mother Goose decorations for the Kindergarten, and now he's working on some friezes for the auditorium of the Settlement.

"I like him — nobody could help liking him — but I don't understand him. He seems way up in the air — not interested in real things. And the girls say that he used to drink — horribly. But he's always sober now."

A letter written a few weeks after Helen's return to the city was devoted to Win. "He's interested in art, too, in literature. He lives with Frank in the Studio on the Square, not far from the Settlement. He writes well. I'm sending you an article of his about the street-car strike. It's real, it will help the men a lot. I wish he'd stick to this sort of work. It's something concrete and useful — more so, I think, than his novels. They're clever and entertaining, but somehow they seem to me — well, less *real*. He's a little like Frank. I don't mean that he drinks too much, not that way, but now and then he seems absent-minded — sort of gazing off into space."

Eunice, propped up on her pillows, often "gazed

off into space." There was a very wonderful make-believe land beyond the four walls of her little room, where everybody was strong and healthy. It did not seem to her a very heinous fault. She tried to say this in her answer, but Helen retorted sharply.

"I haven't time to gaze off into space. I don't see how any serious, active person can. This is a real world we live in and so much of it needs to be put right. Why waste time in idle, abstracted contemplation? Just as one example — Irene and Mary have decreased the number of babies who die out of every hundred born in this district. Think what infant mortality means! All the pain and energy and expenses of childbirth wasted — sheer waste! Gazing off into space won't help. If the nation really got down to the job and did everywhere what these two girls have done here in this district, we could save thousands and thousands of babies. But this sort of thing means work — not dreams.

"There are so many ways of concrete usefulness, how can people find time to paint pictures or write novels — gaze off into space? Art won't keep the babies from dying. I like Frank and Win, but I've more respect for Pete — in spite of his laughing ways, he's always on the job, getting things done — real things."

In another letter, Helen wrote of Professor Lancaster. "The rest of us call each other by our first names just naturally, but somehow nobody does him. He's always 'Lancaster.' He's a bit stiff and formal. He comes from Oregon, but he looks like a New Englander — more than either Frank or Win. He's

rather like St. Gaudens' statue of the Puritan. He's the type you respect long before you begin to like him. He's an immensely hard worker, way up at the top of his specialty — *the* authority on American Indians. He's a very earnest Socialist and has swung us all into the party except Pete.

"They're a queer pair, living together in an apartment they call 'The Diggings' across the Square from the studio — not agreeing on anything except to like each other.

"Pete is always poking fun at him; says he's so used to hard work that, when he has nothing to do, he does it intensely. He's also secretary of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom — very much interested in the revolutionary movement over there and in the Russian comrades here in New York. One night Pete came home from Albany on the midnight train and found three Russian refugees sleeping in his bed! Another time, Pete's mother, a very precise and formal old lady, came to town and wanted to see her son's rooms. Pete picked her up at her hotel and took her to 'The Diggings.' When he opened the door, his mother was nearly scared out of her life. Lancaster had some Hopi Indians from a Wild West Show — he'd been adopted into their tribe — and he'd brought them to his room to do a snake dance for him. He was catching their songs in a phonograph."

More than once, Helen reverted to Pete's unreasonableness. — "I've explained to him a dozen times," she wrote, "that I don't want to get married. It isn't that I'm refusing to marry *him*, I'm refusing matri-

mony in the abstract. I simply can't consider it *now*. This love business is just like writing poetry — I haven't time. I'm too busy. There's too much to do.

"I'm hurt at him — very much hurt — always spoiling things this way. It isn't as if he were a stranger, who didn't understand how I feel about it. He knows. We've talked it over a hundred times; I don't want *to stop work* to get married. It's not merely personal ambition — not just to make a name for myself. It's much broader than that.

"We women simply must struggle for our place in the world — for recognition. Here I am just beginning. I've made a good start, but I've just begun and it isn't an easy job I've undertaken. I'm building up a new profession, I'm creating a job. A social-service financier — that's what Pete calls me himself. It isn't any special cleverness of mine that's succeeding, but steady, hard work — grinding. I want to become an expert at it and now I'm learning the job.

"It would all be wasted — everything I've learned, all the work I've done — if I should stop now. Perhaps after a while — some time in the future — perhaps. But now, I simply can't think of getting married.

"Men are queer about this feminism. Pete has done a lot of work for suffrage, but he forgets all about the ideal — is quite willing to mix up all my plans — just because he happens to fall in love. It seems to me appallingly selfish.

"We're all distressed about Mary. She's decided to get married and leave us. The man's all right, he

was house surgeon in the maternity hospital at first and we liked him. He's gone abroad now for a year's postgraduate work in Vienna and is coming back to start practice out in California. It's an awful blow to us all — especially to Irene. They were such a strong team, working together — but Mary says she wants babies of her own. It's tragic — this continual struggle between personal happiness and the public welfare — the Home vs. the Commonwealth.

“ ‘God bless me and my wife,
My son John and his wife,
Us four,
No more.’

“That's what starting a home means. All Mary's special training and experience, all her valuable and unique talents, in the infant mortality work must go by the board. It seems to me like a desertion. Pete feels just the same about Mary as I do, but that doesn't stop him from trying to pry me loose from my job.”

So from these infrequent visits and irregular letters Eunice got news of the world beyond West Newleigh. To be sure it was a very small sector of the great world on which Helen reported, but it seemed very wonderful to Eunice — a world of youth and health, of ardent hopes and noble efforts.

Her one escape from the all-pervading gloom of the Clarkeson household was a rustic bench under a great elm tree beyond the village. On her “good days,” when she was able to be up, she always walked there. The beauty of her view was the one treasure

of her youth, and in a way it was a private treasure, for no one used this bench except lovers after night-fall. Her neighbors did not care much for scenery, but Eunice loved the place.

West Newleigh, in itself unlovely, sat on the crest of a rolling hill in eastern Pennsylvania. There was a broad outlook from this seat, across a gentle valley, ten miles to the next ridge and the horizon beyond was the purple gray of higher hills. The view held no indication of its date. It might have been the English countryside in the days when the good king Alfred was driving out the Danes. Much of the Danube country, through which the Crusaders marched on their way to the Holy Sepulchre, must have looked very like this bit of modern Pennsylvania.

It was here that Eunice read and reread Helen's letters. It was here that she brought the books and pamphlets Helen sent. She read with care — and much perplexity — the books on Socialism. She was relieved to find that they had nothing in them about bomb-throwing, but — knowing no other life than that of her simple village, they had little meaning for her.

She could not have understood them, and the reports of investigations and so forth, which Helen sent at all if it had not been for Win's novels. He visualized and made alive the people tabulated in the statistics, and also the people who gathered them.

"The Six Hundred" was the one of his books she liked best. Again and again she had read the opening paragraphs.

"The race," he had written, "is rather like an onion: so many layers fitting tightly about the next smaller one—layer after layer down to the tiny germ in the middle. Within the race are scores of great nations, within each nation, provinces; they in turn divided and subdivided into counties, townships, neighborhoods—families. And of course each one of us is the central kernel of his own universe.

"This concentric grouping is not only geographic. We live not only in 'our street,' 'our town,' 'our country,' but also in 'our religious belief,' 'our political creed,' perhaps most of all in 'our trade.'

"Few of these circles within circles are more interesting, more worthy of study, than the social workers. They inhabit no fixed frontiers. Theirs is a fellowship, not of territorial chance, but of common aspirations. There is some mystic magnetism which draws to New York at some time in their career, almost every one who has a passion to make this old world of ours a cleaner, more wholesome, and happier place.

"Very few of these social workers are New York born. They come as often from Kansas or the Coast as from the thirteen original States. A surprising number of them, including the calmest and the most fervid, come from Chicago. In the Charities Building you can hear the accent of every State. But no matter where they were born, no matter what twang or burr sticks to their tongues, they are intensely New Yorkers.

"They are the city become self-conscious. They have investigated the East Side and the West Side. They understand the transportation problems of Brooklyn. They know all the police captains of the Bronx, which ones are honest and which ones intend to get rich. If you chance to be interested in the violations of the tenement-house law in Queens, or the percentage of wayward girls in the city institutions of the Borough of Richmond who are feeble-minded, you can find one of these social workers, who has written a doctor's thesis on the subject.

"No matter what you are seeking among them, you will find youth. Reverence for things old, for retrospection, is at a discount among them. They never produced but one historian—

and he proposed a new philosophy of history. The principal preoccupation of this group is the unborn future.

"If you make inquiries, you will find many people — socially successful people — who never heard of these social workers. I have called them 'The Six Hundred' because of their high daring, but it also serves to distinguish them from the better advertised 'Four Hundred,' who live uptown. They are not fashionable. Other people — prosperous people, with a vested interest in things as they are — will tell you that these social workers are freaks, trouble makers, agitators — nuisances.

"There is a fable yet to be written on what the lump of dough thought about the cake of yeast. Some of the dough probably cut the yeast socially and ignored it, while some of the dough undoubtedly objected to radical innovation and edited weekly journals which advocated the suppression of yeast. These social workers are a ferment. They are rejuvenating all the implications of our city life and they are beginning to be interested in rural problems. Whether the dough likes it or not, it can not resist the leavening.

"So if you wish to know what New York City and the broad continent behind it will be like fifty years hence, go to these people. Do not pay attention to what the 'best people' say about them, do not let your attention be distracted by the queer clothes they sometimes wear, nor by the vile food they often eat in their garrets, but study their dreams.

"Nothing much matters to them but their dreams — and bitter hard work to make them come true."

Eunice would close her eyes very tightly, when she read such things. She did not like to cry, but the tears always tried to come through when she let herself imagine too vividly what life might be like for her, if only she were well. From Helen and her books she had acquired a "social conscience." She would have liked to be a part of this rejuvenating ferment, to bear her share in bringing the New Day.

When she "gazed off into space," through the walls of her little bedroom or from her seat under the elm, the make-believe stage and beyond was not set to represent the glory that was Greece, nor the grandeur that was Rome. She daydreamed, not of levees at the Court of St. James nor of dinners at Sherry's, but of walking beside Helen in the great city, of the brave plans and earnest efforts of her friends in the real world.

It was not often that Eunice could get to this favorite spot; once or twice a week in summertime. The short walk was always a great event for her, but it did her more good than any medicine — just to sit there an hour or so in silence and read and dream.

Many a languid hour, when she was bed-bound, was cheered for her by her small cousins. On account of their mother's ill health, they would have been decidedly neglected children if Eunice had not fulfilled the duties of a nursery governess. But it did not seem an unpleasant task to her; she loved children, and, besides, any rôle was better than absolute uselessness. The Fates had been unkind to her in not letting her know how the wild flowers grow on the hillside. But she knew just how a nose grows on a little boy's face.

CHAPTER III

EUNICE AND THE CITY

Four years had passed thus monotonously for Eunice, since Helen had left on her quest for things "worth while," when a new burden was laid on her frail shoulders — poverty.

Mr. Clarkeson, her uncle, a tall, gaunt, strangely ineffectual man, came into her bedroom one morning with an air of solemnity and harassed depression. He habitually looked on the bright side of things, but this morning the sun of his optimism was eclipsed. With much embarrassment and many digressions after meaningless details, he explained that an unfortunate investment had wiped out all that was left of the Ripley heritage and Eunice's insurance money as well. There was nothing left for them all but his small and inadequate salary as town clerk. He was very anxious to have her understand that it had been "a perfectly sound investment." Had he cared for his wife's money and hers these many years and never lost a cent? This showed that he was safe and sane.

For the details of the catastrophe Eunice had no comprehension nor interest; the ruin was all she understood. What to do without a cent in the world? She could not live at her uncle's expense; he was going to have a miserably close time with his own family. She had never been of much use to any one and now

she threatened to be a burden. The weakness and the pain with which she was so familiar seemed a very small thing to bear compared to this.

The first glimmer of hope that penetrated her bewildered dismay was the possibility of selling some of her pictures to a magazine. Years before she had sent one of her drawings to a juvenile competition in *The Children's World* and had won a prize of five dollars and a life's subscription. Nowadays, as she showed the magazine to the children, she often thought that her pictures were just as good. In spite of her cloistered life, she was wise enough to realize that grown-ups will pay almost anything to keep children quiet.

Without taking any one into her confidence, she mailed to the magazine a colored drawing she had made of a circus parade. The principal figure was a wonderful giraffe, which would have shocked any naturalist, but was exactly what her cousins thought a proper giraffe should look like. Accompanying it, she sent a rhymed story for the picture to illustrate.

The next weeks were breathless for her, thrilling and miserable. At best she hoped for five or ten dollars, and the family bills were running up appallingly. At last the picture came back, but there was a friendly, encouraging letter from Mr. Britton, the editor. He said that he liked the verse, but that the colors she had used in the picture made reproduction impossibly expensive. "You are evidently unfamiliar with the processes we employ, with the limitations of the press and of printer's ink. I am sending you herewith a copy of 'Picture Printing,' which we have compiled

for the benefit of our contributors. *The Children's World* makes a specialty of developing new talent. Your picture is unavailable, but, if you will redraw it in accordance with the instructions in this book, we may be able to use it."

Eunice found the book hopeless. She did not know the difference between half-tone screens and the three-color process. It was too complicated — too scientific — to understand. She tried embroidery. But in four weeks, the Women's Exchange sold only one dollar's worth of her work and she had a sick suspicion that the rector's wife had bought that out of kindness. She had some fine old lace, which had come to her through at least three generations and she sold a hundred dollars' worth of that to a curio shop in Philadelphia for twenty-five.

She did not write to Helen about this new "trouble." Why should she? There was nothing Helen could do about it. And so, having no one to confide in, her despair was all the darker.

Two days after she had written to the State Board of Charities to learn the terms of admission to the poor house, she received a "follow-up letter" from the editor of *The Children's World*. Mr. Britton had been impressed by that strange giraffe, his own children had been enthusiastic, and, what was more impressive, they had liked the verses. Now, although it is the adults who pay the subscription, it is desirable to have something in a children's magazine which will interest children, and the contributors who can write the kind of verses the children really like, instead of the kind that their parents think it would be nice

for them to like, are hard to find. A letter of encouragement would cost Mr. Britton only a postage stamp and there was a chance that if this unknown Miss Bender worked hard — at no expense to him — she might learn how to make a good deal of money for him.

The letter produced the effect he had hoped for, it was just the fillip her fainting courage needed. It came on one of her "good days" and she walked down to the village printing shop to look at a press. There was a new foreman, who, in soberer days, had been a photo-engraver. He was quite willing to stop work and talk. With his help and the book to guide her, she set to work again.

This new effort was rewarded by a check for fifty dollars. Of course Eunice was elated — a check like that now and then would more than pay her expenses. A second picture was soon mailed and accepted.

Just as Eunice had been reluctant to tell Helen of her misfortune, she was too modest to write of her good luck. Her uncle, who was hurt in his manly pride at being rescued by his invalid niece, was discouraging. It was one of the few things about which he was pessimistic. He warned her not to expect too much, they would soon tire of her foolish pictures. It is often easier to see the silver lining to one's own failures than to another's successes.

Of course Eunice quickly developed an ambition. She started work on a series — "The Adventures of Tit, Tat, Toe, and Little Tot." They were aged five, four, three and one. Except for their size they looked exactly alike. They all wore white Russian blouses

and broad black belts and wore their hair à la Jeanne d'Arc. The three older children had a nurse named Hattie, who was very tall and thin. Little Tot lived in a baby carriage, pushed by a very fat nurse named Mattie, and trailed along behind. In one picture they shot off firecrackers on the Fourth. In another they celebrated Tot's first birthday with a lawn party. In the third they went to the barnyard to watch the milking. Tat had always thought that cream came from calves, just as milk comes from cows. Tit, being a boy and so much older, knew better and pointed the finger of scorn at her.

Eunice thought that fifty dollars was a generous pay for her work — Mr. Britton had said so — and it would not have occurred to her to ask for more, but just as she was finishing the third of this series, before she had sent in any of them, a letter came to her from *Toyland* offering her a hundred dollars for a contribution. She inclosed this letter to Mr. Britton, when she sent the first three of her series to him as samples. There was a very quick response from him inclosing a contract for a year's exclusive work in *The Children's World* — twelve of the "Tit, Tat, Toe, and Little Tot" pictures and verses, at a hundred and fifty a month.

That was more than her uncle earned! She wrote about it in her next letter to Helen — "I'm doing some drawings and verses for *The Children's World*. It's easy because I've always done it for fun. They pay well, which is very lucky, for Uncle Tom lost some money on a bad investment and now I can help them a little." This letter reached Helen when she

was off on a trip, organizing child labor committees in the up-State towns. She tried once or twice to buy a copy of *The Children's World*, but was not able to find one and, before she returned to New York, she had forgotten the matter. Eunice did not allude to it again. Of course she felt herself wonderfully fortunate; but, after all, drawing pictures for children is petty business compared to the "real," "worth-while" work that Helen was doing.

When "The Adventures of Tit, Tat, Toe, and Little Tot" began to appear in *The Children's World*, Mr. Britton congratulated himself on his acumen. In Eunice he had discovered a gold mine. The pictures had "caught on." He decided that there would be a rich by-product in the publication of this series as a Christmas book, and — without realizing what an upheaval he was causing in her life — asked her to come to New York to discuss the matter.

What a blaze this request lit in Eunice's brain! She was not much interested in the book, but she had always wanted to visit New York. She had never permitted herself to realize how much she wanted to see Helen's friends, the Settlement, the Maternity Hospital — above all she wanted to see Frank's pictures. But all this had seemed impractical. She could not afford the expense and, besides, she had no excuse for going; she would only be in the way, interfering with busy people. But now, she had business of her own.

And for the first time in her life she felt well enough to go. The thought that she had something to do, some regular work, some usefulness in the world, had

been the best of tonics for her. In the years before, she had often stayed in bed, because there was no reason to get up, but most of these pictures she was drawing were set out of doors and so, wanting to be up, she found it easier than she had thought and every day that she did get up made it easier the next.

This momentous letter reached her on a Friday. For the first time in her life she looked up a railroad time-table. She wrote, in a great flutter of excitement, a formal letter to Mr. Britton, saying that she would call at his office at ten on Monday morning. She wrote at length to Helen, carefully explaining that business of her own was bringing her to town and that she did not intend to be a bother. It was only at the very first that she would need any help, advice about a hotel and so forth. But she did hope that Helen could meet her train.

It was a decidedly frayed young person who got off the sleeping car in Jersey City on Monday morning. In spite of the lethargic name of her conveyance, Eunice had not closed an eye all night. And trouble began for her at once — she had not counted on having to cross the ferry alone. It was a rather breath-taking adventure, but it was soon forgotten in the blank dismay of not finding Helen to welcome her on the Manhattan side.

Eunice was very bewildered as she stood there alone in the ferry house. The city had taken on a forbidding and unfriendly aspect. She had expected that Helen would meet her and take her to the Settlement to stay — but she could not go there uninvited. The only place she could think of to go was the Hotel

Santa Fé, of which Helen had spoken. It was at least near the Settlement. She gritted her teeth and found a cab.

Why had Helen failed her? This question troubled her so much that she hardly noticed the city, which she had so often tried to imagine. The roar of an "elevated" overhead startled her into attention for a minute, but through most of the ride she was only vaguely conscious of the rumble and jar, of the feverish hurly-burly life of the streets.

After a forlorn and very lonely breakfast — between every unappetizing mouthful of which she asked herself what could be the matter with Helen — she resolved to telephone to the Settlement and find out. The young lady at the other end of the line gave up what information she had reluctantly. Miss Cash was out of town. She had been away for a week. She was attending a Senate hearing at Albany on the Child Labor Law. She had not left word when she would be back. Even more reluctantly she consented to take a message for Miss Cash that Miss Bender was stopping at the Santa Fé.

It was a great relief to Eunice to learn that Helen had been out of town and so could not have received her letter. This was a very much more comforting explanation of her lack of welcome than the thought of indifference or displeasure at her coming. But what a fool she had been not to wait till she was sure that Helen was in town. She had counted more than she had realized on her friend. Now, she would have to do everything herself — alone. This was dismaying — but dismay would not get her any-

where, so she stiffened her upper lip and set out bravely to the office of *The Children's World*.

The memory of that first interview with Mr. Britton always caused Eunice a shudder. It was her first face-to-face encounter with business. In spite of her inexperience in such matters, she realized that however fine a gentleman Mr. Britton might be — and he had a very impressive office — it was all a matter of dollars and cents with him. It was a bargain and she did not know how to be hard. She felt that she should be on her guard, but she had no shield. She would have signed anything he suggested just to get it over with — just to get out of the office.

But her precipitation in dashing to New York, which had worked out badly in regard to Helen, saved her here. Mr. Britton had not expected her to come so soon. He had been away for the week-end and so had not had time to prepare a contract. He brought the interview to an end by asking her to come the next day to sign up.

Eunice was trembling all over when she got back to the hotel. It was time for lunch, but she had no thought of that. She could scarcely find strength to take off her hat and coat before tumbling on the bed. Tired as her body was, in spite of the bursting pain in her head, the hurt to her soul was worse. She was filled with a new and distressing resentment. She had never had to distrust any one before. She knew that Mr. Britton was trying in some way to take advantage of her and — this was the worst of it — she would have to see him again on the morrow. Why — why had she ever come to this cruel city?

Just as she reached the very bottom of the slough of despond, Helen burst in on her. The letter, forwarded to Albany, had reached her at breakfast and, dropping her work, she had hurried down to New York on the first train to be of help. One glance at the disconsolate heap on the bed which was Eunice made her very glad that she had come — Eunice so obviously needed help. In West Newleigh the neighbors would have called Helen “capable,” in New York her friends said that she was “efficient.” It did not take her five minutes to get the situation in hand. What had really troubled Eunice most had been the worry, and now, with Helen at her side, there was no more any reason to worry.


First of all Helen straightened her out on the bed and arranged the pillows where they would do the most good. Then she sent for some chicken broth and telephoned to the Maternity Hospital for Mary Dutton.

“Now,” she said, sitting down in the old, accustomed attitude on the foot of the bed, “tell me all about it.”

The broth was a great source of comfort and gave Eunice strength to tell her story.

“I’ll put Win on that job,” Helen said, when Eunice had told of her interview with Mr. Britton. “He’s had a lot of books published and knows all about contracts.”

Thus another worry was lifted from Eunice’s shoulders — she would not have to face Mr. Britton again alone — and presently Mary came in with a white-haired old gentleman.



"Hello!" she said cheerily. "I don't have to be introduced, Helen has told me so much about you. This is Dr. Riggs. He was just through at the hospital and I brought him along on the off chance that he might be of use."

"Oh, I don't need a doctor," Eunice protested. "I'm only tired."

"If you don't mind," he said, "I'll look you over. People who are really well don't get tired easily."

She thought that she would have to tell him about her ailments — something she always hated to do — but he stopped her little speech by sticking a thermometer in her mouth. His hands were very large and looked awkward, but they were sure and strangely soothing. Rolling back the lids, he looked deeply into her eyes. Putting down his ear, he listened a long time to the sob and sigh of her tired heart. All the while he did not ask a question.

Helen and Mary stood at the foot of the bed watching the proceedings, and it seemed to Eunice that they had their arms about her.

"Stay in bed this afternoon," he said, getting up abruptly, "go out and sit in the Square in the morning, if it's funny. See your friends. Have a good time. Don't mope. But take things easy, you mustn't get tired like this." He consulted his engagement book. "Come to my office Wednesday morning — ten-thirty. I'll give you a thorough examination. I'll leave a prescription at the drug store and have it sent up at once. Good-by."

"I've nothing to do this afternoon but write some letters," Mary said to Helen, when the doctor had

left. "I might just as well do it here. So, if you're busy, run along."

"Oh, I hate to be such a bother," Eunice said.

But they just laughed at her. Helen said that she was busy and, promising to be back at five, hurried off to her office.

Mary bet Eunice that she could get her into her nightgown and under the sheets without raising her head three inches.

"Oh, of course you could do it yourself, but I like to show off. Watch me."—"Helen told us that you have beautiful hair," she said as she exhibited her skill, "but I did not expect it to be so marvelous."

"You're not at all what I expected, either," Eunice said; "Helen told me so much about your work—saving the babies. I expected to be very much in awe of you—a little afraid. But I'm not. I don't believe anybody could be afraid of you."

"Oh, yes, they could be. I know one person anyhow who is—the man I'm threatening to marry. He's scared stiff."

"I don't believe it."

But the argument was interrupted by the arrival of the medicine which Dr. Riggs had ordered.

"It was a laugh on me," Mary said as she brought the powder and a glass of water. "There wasn't any reason for me to drag Dr. Riggs over here. I could have prescribed this powder myself—it's just to put you to sleep."

"Oh, there's no use pretending. I know what's the matter with me. But I've been so much better of late that I didn't think I'd get tired so easily. But

you started to tell me about the man you are going to marry. I don't believe he's afraid of you."

"Yes, he is. He eats out of the hand. But if I begin talking about Freddie, you'll never get to sleep — and besides I want to write to him."

Eunice lay there very comfortably, watching Mary bent over the paper. Whatever Helen's other talents, she was not good at describing people. Eunice had expected Mary to be so different, rather austere — and thin. She was all soft curves and graciousness and merry smiles.

The sight of her, writing to the man she loved, stirred all sorts of drowsy speculations. How would it feel to be in love? What sort of a man would Mary care for? Of one thing Eunice was sure — he was a lucky dog!

How the city had changed for her in these few hours! All the morning it had seemed soulless and hostile. But Mary and this famous doctor were more lovable than the people she had known in West New-leigh. And Helen was so wonderful.

Gradually every sound — even the noisy traffic of the street — became faint. She heard the blast of a steamship's siren — it sounded so very far away — perhaps halfway to Europe. The scratching of Mary's pen took on the sound of a loving human voice, singing a low and opiate lullaby.

When Eunice woke up, the morning sun was shining in through the windows. Helen, already arrayed for her day's work, was smiling at her cheerily. It took her several dazed moments to realize that she had slept all through the afternoon and the night as well.

The next few weeks passed for Eunice like what the magazine trade calls "a sunshine serial." It seemed altogether too good to be true. Everybody did things for her, as though to make her forget that first unfriendly morning. Certainly, Helen never realized how valuable she was to Eunice in this crisis.

With royal generosity, Helen shared her friends. Win's business advice was only the most obvious move in the conspiracy of helpfulness. The contracts he arranged for Eunice were very much better than she could have hoped to obtain by herself. And he was very insistent that, if she wanted a good job on her book, she ought to stay in the city to see it through the press. Helen jumped at the idea. She was a bit tired of life in the Settlement. She was really too busy to give much time to the work there and there were many applicants for her place. She found a vacant apartment near the Square which just fitted them. Even after the popularity of her work had grown and her income had increased greatly, Eunice could never have arranged her life so comfortably as Helen did it for her. Helen loved to manage things, she loved details — she even liked to keep accounts. So Eunice did not have to waste any of her scant energy on such harassing details. The "Flat," as they called the new establishment, soon won a place for itself beside the "Studio" and "The Diggings" as an accepted rendezvous of the group.

Frank was usually slow at making friendships, but he at once fell captive to Eunice's charm; he helped her greatly in her work and, having a wide acquaintance among the artist folk of the city, he brought

around many of the best illustrators, who shared with her their knowledge of the technique of the trade. Irene in her kindergarten could always find plenty of models. And Mary adopted her. "You're to be my heir and legatee," she said. "I must prepare your shoulders to bear my mantle when I go." At every turn, Eunice found some one of Helen's friends smoothing out the rough places before her feet.

But of greater value than any of these comforts and conveniences was the medical aid of Dr. Riggs. His name was known the world around for his scientific attainments, but only those who had been privileged to come close to him personally realized his human bigness, the extent to which he exceeded and transcended the limits of his professions. Helen had first met him through the Child Labor Committee. The prestige of his great name had done more than any other contribution, more than the most generous check, for the Cause of the Little Children. And Helen had interested him in the Maternity Hospital. He loved these ardent young people, who shared with him the dream of a healthier race to come. Sometimes when he was utterly tired with the tremendous rush of his work, he would escape to the Settlement for an evening's rest with them.

His examination of Eunice was so thorough, so adroit, so understanding that it inspired her with a happy confidence.

"It's this way," he said, when it was over, "you have only a little energy. If you want to live a long time, you must be saving with it. You must not get tired and worried as you were the first day. You

used up perhaps a year's energy that time. Take things easy. Keep cheerful. There's no use taking medicine. A quiet, happy life is the best we can do for you. And remember that bed is no place to be except at night. Get up every day you possibly can and get outdoors — a walk in the Square at least."

This seemed sensible to Eunice and much more pleasant than taking the endless concoctions, Helen's father, the village doctor, had given her.

"There's only one medicine I prescribe," he went on, "and the less you take of it the better. It will make you sleep. It's better than insomnia — than tossing about. But that's all I can say for it. Days when you get your lungs full of fresh air, you'll sleep naturally — and that's better than any medicine."

Things went so smoothly and pleasantly for Eunice, thanks to Helen's watchful care, that she had no need to take this medicine for several months. Then Win bought a box at the opera to celebrate the appearance of a new novel.

Eunice had never been to the theater and this night it was "Tristan and Isolde." Such beauty of sight and sound she had never dreamed of, and over and above all the wonders that happened on the stage was the infectious thrill of the great audience, stirred in unison by the magic of the orchestra. "I had never heard any music," Eunice said as she tried to thank Win, "but an ill-tuned piano and phonographs."

As they rode home in the cab, Helen, who sat beside her, felt her trembling spasmodically.

"Tired?" she asked.

"Aren't you?" Eunice was amazed that any one, after such an evening, could be calm. "You're never tired," she added enviously. "You're wonderful!"

That night Eunice could not sleep. Again and again the trembling fit seized her. At last she got up and looked about for the sleeping draught. Helen heard her and called.

"Oh, it's nothing. I'm looking for some medicine to make me sleep."

Helen had inherited from her father an exaggerated, morbid dread of "drugs." She popped out of bed and cross-examined Eunice sharply. It was hard for her to believe that Dr. Riggs had advised "taking drugs." So she went to the hospital the next morning to see him before his clinic.

"It's about Eunice," she said. "Do you approve of her taking drugs to make her sleep?"

He asked a few questions about the cause of her sleeplessness.

"The drug will put her to sleep — spare her a little pain and discomfort. Even drugs will do her no harm — it takes too long a time for them to form a habit."

"Is it as bad at that?"

She was breathless with a sudden realization that her friend's condition was so much more serious than she had let herself believe. He nodded gravely.

"Oh, doctor, why didn't you tell me? I'm afraid I've been unkind."

"You've been kinder than you could have been if I had told you. You've been treating her as if she were really alive. That's best for her. I suppose she knows, people in her condition always do — somehow.

But we must never remind her. You have done more for her than I. Your cheerful manner is better than any medicine. It will come — when it comes — speedily and with no pain, I hope. There is little any one can do for her body. You have done — and, now that the habit is formed, will continue to do — a great deal for her peace of mind. Do not let her know our fears. Treat her as if she were a regular person. Keep her gay and active. Boss her about, don't let her mope. Only don't let her get over-tired. Above all be as merry as you can be yourself."

"Isn't there any hope?"

Dr. Riggs twisted his watch chain for a moment and then looked up at her with a weary but wonderful, marvelous smile.

"Such things are sheer mystery to me; the only explanation is the Christian belief. We would understand," he went on in reply to Helen's blank look, "that God was jealous of us — wanted for Himself the joy of her company."

There were many waiting for the doctor in the clinic. There was nothing more to be said and Helen started to go.

"It is not an easy rôle for you, Miss Cash," he said, putting a hand on her shoulder. "But it is not an easy rôle for me, either. We doctors have to get used to losing our patients. Death always defeats us in the end. We cannot be as impersonal about our cases as we are supposed to be. Something in your friend's sweet courage has taken hold of my imagination. My own daughter died — very long ago. I think that, if she had lived, she might have been like your friend."

There is almost nothing I can do for her, so I count on you."

"But I'm so ignorant about such——"

"You have already done wonders. Really, very much more than I. Together"—the grip on her shoulder tightened—"we will cheat God of her company as long as we can."

It was not an easy rôle for Helen. Before this talk she had not realized that Eunice was as sick as, most unfortunately, she was. Health never can understand and sympathize with illness, and Helen had always believed that the less one thought about bodily weakness the better. She was naturally cheerful, but she had gone out of her way to laugh at her own physical discomforts for Eunice's benefit. Her instinctive brusqueness in such matters she had emphasized in this case.

Now her spirit wanted to speak softly before Eunice, to walk on tiptoe. But her mind obeyed the doctor and stamped about and slammed the doors and laughed uproariously. Intentionally she increased her affected callousness. She often wondered if Eunice saw through the pose. And sometimes Eunice wondered if this manner sprang from gross uncomprehension or from marvelous solicitude. It often jarred on her and sometimes vexed her beyond words, but on the whole she was glad of it. She did not want pity.

Probably nothing which Helen did for Eunice helped her so much as this carefully studied appearance of lack of sympathy. In her aunt's home, sickness had been an ever-present reality which no one

could even momentarily forget. Helen breezily ignored its existence. In this new life, Eunice found people thinking and talking of other things, and sometimes for hours on end she forgot that she was ill. There was nothing in the atmosphere which Helen created to remind her of it. Like most invalids she was inclined to be supersensitive and timid, but she could never be frightened, with Helen's calm and sturdy assurance to support her.

Inevitably a large part of Eunice's life was second-hand. Almost all she knew of the city, this bewildering new world, she learned through Helen or Helen's friends. It was a fortunate month if she got out of doors every day. The fatigues of riding up the Avenue in a bus to look at the pictures in the Metropolitan had to be paid for by an afternoon in bed. To go out at night to a theater or a concert was a great event. So she saw the world very largely through Helen's eyes — as through colored glasses.

To be sure there was a treasure house in the inmost citadel of her spirit where she stored away her own impressions of life. Pondering things over in the leisure of her frequent solitudes — when her friend was out in the midst of the traffic — she reached truer and more subtle judgments. But it was very rarely that she exhibited any of these private treasures to others. In far and away most of the matters, which came to her attention, Helen was very much better informed than she. While she did not always agree with her friend's dictums, she seldom disputed them.

CHAPTER IV

SUNDAY BREAKFAST

When Frank Lockwood had married Lillian, Win had, of course, had to leave the Studio where they had lived together so long. Luckily Professor Lancaster had found it necessary to move uptown to be nearer the university, so Win had moved into "The Diggings" with Pete McGee. It was to this apartment, overlooking the Square, that he had invited his friends for Sunday breakfast to meet the Stranger.

The large study was wainscoted with bookshelves. There were volumes of law reports, congressional records, encyclopedias of social reforms, and so forth which represented McGee's habit of mind. Scattered through the shelves was a very fair assortment of the world's best literature of Win's selection.

The mantelshelf over the fireplace, where Win was coaxing the coals into a welcoming blaze, was reserved for "the firm's output." At one end were his two volumes of verse, his "History of King Philip's War," and his string of novels. At the other end were a score or more of unbound pamphlets, in each of which Pete argued for or against some bill which had been before the New York State legislature.

Win had spread on his writing table a Russian bridal apron, heavy, hand-woven linen on the borders of which some long-forgotten peasant girl had em-

broidered all the dreams of her maidenhood. A copper coffee percolator bubbled and purred over an alcohol lamp. A pile of oranges on a silver plate sat between a dish of hot buns and a great Viennese "*nusskuchen*." There was also an inelegant, squat bottle of cream.

A few minutes after nine there was a thumping at the door and in came the Lockwoods, Helen and Eunice.

Eunice, although she was manifestly frail, was in nowise gaunt. Helen was a finely built woman, strikingly healthy, but if she had fallen ill and lost a little flesh her bones would have shown through. If Eunice had any bones at all they were very small and slender. There was in her great eyes something of a child's trustfulness and unconscious purity, which kept most men from falling in love with her. Generally her expression seemed detached and far away, but when some interest lit it with a sudden smile, she seemed startlingly close. Her skin was so soft and fine that it hardly seemed to be there. It was almost as though there were no sharply drawn limit between herself and the circumambient air. And the mass of her golden hair, going brown in the shadows, was quite wonderful.

The greetings had the ring of long-established, informal friendship.

"It's too bad," Lillian said, "that Pete isn't here to make us laugh."

"Is your Stranger coming?" Helen asked.

"I told him to come as soon as he heard what sounded like a riot here."

As he spoke there was a knock at the door. Win went to open it and introduced Mr. Lane.

The Stranger's manner was the opposite from rigid; it was something between slouchiness and grace. He was evidently abashed by the company and as evidently anxious to be agreeable.

Frank, with his artist's eye, saw the easy movements of his well-conditioned muscles beneath his clothes. The women all wondered how old he was. There was a suggestion of boyishness about him, which was heightened by his embarrassment. But his face, an intelligent, meager Scotch face, was mature.

His dress was inconspicuous, except for a very old-fashioned collar. Helen noticed the queer collar. Lillian, seeing that his trousers were properly pressed, decided that he was a gentleman. Eunice caught the eager and constant question in his eyes.

"The coffee isn't quite ready," Win said. "We'd best stave off hunger with smoke. Here are some marvelous cigarettes to which Mr. Lane introduced me."

"Where do you get them?" Frank asked as he lit one. "They *are good*. You'll have to lead me to them."

"A friend makes them. An Armenian. It is amusing. He is a dealer in Oriental curios and also he is a great smoker — a real connoisseur. He could not be happy without the best. He cannot afford to import fine Turkish tobaccos for his own use alone, so he makes and sells enough to pay for his luxury. It does not make him rich, but gives him great con-

tentment. It is the same with coffee. He imports the finest Aden coffee — enough for commerce to pay his own pleasure. One cannot get better Turkish coffee in Stamboul.”

“I’ve always wanted to taste some real Turkish coffee,” Helen said.

“I have some every morning. There is some even now in my room. Perhaps — but, no — Mr. Mathews is making coffee for us.”

“Let’s have some of yours,” Win said. “I invite competition.”

Lane opened the window overlooking the Square, and called some mysterious words in an unknown tongue. The window of his apartment opened and there was a conversation in strange gutturals. Presently a young man, his head adorned by a red fez, appeared with a brass tray which held three tiny cups of steaming black coffee. Bowing profoundly, he offered them to the ladies.

“I can make some more in two minutes for the gentlemen,” he said.

Frank and Win both said they would like to try it, if it were not too much trouble.

“No trouble at all,” Lane said. “He’ll make some more,” and he spoke again in Turkish. The young man in the fez bowed and hurried out.

“What good English your servant speaks,” Lillian said when he had disappeared.

“He is not my servant. We share those rooms together.”

“You order him about,” Lillian said, “like a servant.”

"No, he is not a servant. He is employed in the Turkish consulate. But he is younger than I."

"Well," Eunice said, "if he's your friend, why doesn't he join us?"

"Mr. Mathews did not invite him," Lane said, with some confusion.

"I've not met him," Win said. "We'll have him in, by all means."

So when the young man returned with more coffee he was introduced as Ali Zaky Bey. In every way he was more assured than Lane. He started a glib, fashionable conversation with Helen and Lillian, in which he made a parade of his knowledge of New York slang and continually referred to his acquaintances among the rich and powerful, who live uptown.

Frank and Win and Eunice talked to Lane.

As they were finishing their breakfast there was a new commotion at the door and Professor Lancaster came in with a white-haired old gentleman whom he started to introduce as the renowned Russian revolutionist, Dmitri Inslavsky.

The introductions were still in progress when Inslavsky, who seemed half provoked at being brought into so carefree an assembly, caught sight of Lane.

"*Tovarish*," he exploded in Russian.

He grasped Lane by both shoulders, turned him toward the window to make sure his eyes had not deceived him, and kissed him resoundingly on both cheeks.

Having found a friend, it was only grudgingly that the old man remembered to be courteous to the others.

"It is," he said in his halting English, "that I knew him — long ago — in Russia. Oh, yes! And to find the boy here! It is fifteen years. I thought he must be dead. He is so brave. I must go with him — somewhere; a talk — yes, yes, a long talk. There are many things I must ask him — yes — a long talk. To him I owe more than my life — yes — much more. A fine boy!" There were tears in the old man's eyes as he patted Lane's back. "Yes, a fine boy. And skillful with disguises — very skillful. Yes, and brave ——" He waved his hands in gesture of the superlative.

Lane was mightily embarrassed at the demonstration of affection, at the eulogy, at being so abruptly thrust into the limelight. He fairly shrank with distress.

"If it is proper — to leave like this," he stammered, "I will take him to my room."

"Of course it's all right," Win assured him. "Old friends come first. We're glad to have helped you find each other."

"Yes," Lane replied, apparently not altogether pleased. "Thank you. But it was very pleasant to meet you all. I do not know many Americans. I hope — perhaps — some other time ——"

He glanced around uncertainly, first at the men, then at the women, especially at Eunice, as if she of all those unfamiliar people might understand his embarrassment, his wish to be cordial, his fear of pushing himself where he was not welcomed.

"Sure," Win said. "We all hope to see more of you."

"We will," Eunice said, with her rare and proximate smile.

"If I come to your room to-morrow afternoon," Frank said, "about five, will you take me to see your Armenian friend?"

"I will be glad to."

"I'll come, too," Win said.

Inslavsky was as impatient as a child. He hardly gave Lane time to make these adieux. Before they were out of the door he threw his arm about the younger man's shoulders and broke into a flood of sonorous Russian, which Lane seemed to understand quite as easily as Turkish and English.

As soon as they had left, Ali Zaky Bey got up imperturbably and announced that, to his profound regret, the Ottoman Government did not recognize the Christian Sabbath and that he must hurry away to his desk at the consulate.

Speculation broke loose the moment he had disappeared.

"Who is this man Lane?" Lancaster asked.

"That's just the question," Win answered. "Who is he?"

"He seems like a gentleman," Lillian said.

Lancaster, not liking the word "gentleman," opposed this verdict.

"Inslavsky would not have called him '*Tovarish*,' that means 'comrade,' if he had not been a true revolutionist — well, we'll find out about him in time. Anyhow my morning plans are spoiled. I wanted you to have a talk with the old man, Win. His story is wonderful. I want you to write a magazine article

about him. It would help a great deal. Sorry I can't fritter away my time with you idlers, but I'm rushed to death. I must run along."

He hurried away to his multitudinous busynesses.

"Well," Win asked, "will he do?"

"He has my vote," Helen said. "He looks interesting."

"When he takes you to that cigarette store, Frank," Lillian said, "you can ask him to dinner; let's see — Tuesday or Thursday. It don't matter. And I'll invite him for Thanksgiving. And, say, how about his friend — this Ali Something Bey? 'Bey' means 'prince,' don't it? We ought to call him 'Your Highness.' He'd make five men, if he'd come, and we could ask that new nurse, Miss Claridge. Irene's anxious to have us take her in."

"We might have her, anyhow," Eunice said. "We don't need to have couples. But I vote against this prince — if that's what 'Bey' means. Mr. Lane doesn't like him. I felt that I'd made a break, the minute I suggested that he should join us."

"Why, Mr. Lane said they were friends," Lillian insisted.

"No. He said they were living together. He doesn't like him."

"I didn't notice that," Helen said. "But the Bey didn't make a hit with me. He's too slick."

Lillian did not want to lose her prince. But no amount of argument could shake Eunice's conviction that Lane did not like his roommate.

"When a woman cannot produce reasons for an

opinion," Win said, quoting from his last novel, "she's quite likely right."

"That's the cheapest thing you ever wrote," Helen snorted indignantly.

"Yes," Frank agreed. "It's such an unmarried epigram. It sounds so bachelorish."

But Lillian was too intent on her Thangsgiving project to allow herself to be distracted by such by-play. In her mind there should always be a man for every woman. She would not hear of an odd number. So it was decided that the party should consist of the Lockwoods, Helen and Eunice, Lancaster and Irene, Win and this Mr. Lane.

When this was decided the guests departed. And Win, after clearing away his breakfast wreckage, spread out his papers and settled down to work.

Lillian always spent Sundays with her parents. Helen hurried off uptown with her, and Eunice walked across the Square with Frank to the Studio.

CHAPTER V

LOVE AND THE OTHERS

Of all the friends in the city to whom Helen had introduced her, Eunice felt closest to Frank. It sometimes seemed to her as though her illness were a magic cloak of invisibility, which allowed her to wander unnoticed into the lives of her friends, to penetrate more deeply into their intimacies than was permitted to those who were well. The fact was true enough — people did not pull down the blinds at her approach, arrange the drapery of their veils, nor stiffen into a pose. But the explanation she gave herself for this fact was all wrong. Sickness had nothing to do with it.

Her curiosity about life was so eager and naïve, her interest in people so friendly, her sympathetic understanding so sure — so uncensorious — that no one felt it offensive. It was charming. People found it easy — and safe — to be relaxed and off their guard with her. These new friends, as Helen had always been, were unashamed and unreserved before her.

There was something elusive about Frank. Sooner or later his friends found a door that was closed. He was cordial and approachable; no one could say that he kept them at arm's-length. But he kept every one back a finger's breadth from the threshold of his Inner Shrine. In the first years of his mar-

riage he had tried to tempt Lillian across it. But she was not interested. She did not understand his goddess. His efforts to initiate her into the cult had bored her. This rebuff had only made him the more sensitive about it, the more careful to keep the door of the Sanctuary closed. But he had opened it — at first very shyly — to Eunice.

To be sure, she had become more quickly and easily acquainted with Win. Often, when he saw her from his window taking her morning walk in the Square, he would come out and join her. He had told her all about his own life — his struggle to break away from his Bostonian heritage. "The trouble with me," he said, "is that I'm too damned refined — cursed with culture." He told her of the years of his youth he had wasted, trying to revive the brave old traditions of New England letters — his transcendental sonnets, his volume of essays on "Taste," his "History of King Philip's War." "The only thing I can say for myself is that I wasn't flippant. God knows I took myself seriously. I wanted to write, but I wasted my time on the kind of things people expected me to do. I didn't write those sonnets because there was an emotion in me yearning for expression — but because they had written verses at Brook Farm. My essays! I didn't have anything to say, but they told me that the essay was a noble form of literature, shamefully neglected by this commercial age. I spent three years on that history — not because any one was interested in a third-rate scrimmage with the Indians — I wasn't interested myself — but history came after verses and essays."

"I don't believe you were such a fool," Eunice said.

"Yes, I was. But I never had a chance. My parents caught me too young. Prescott, of the Fine Phrases, Emerson, Apostle of the Obvious — those were the only ideals they gave men. That's Boston! Culture! — not as a weapon in a crusade, not as a means to a larger, fuller, more vital life — no, — but culture as an end in itself. And a snobbish end at that! It was Frank who jerked me out of the rut — rescued me from this deadening Bostonism. What the Vandals did to the Roman Empire wasn't a patch on what Frank did to me!

"Once, when we were just getting acquainted, he explained to me why he didn't do the regular stunt of copying the Old Masters in the museum. 'Why should I?' he said; 'I'll never have to paint a Spanish guy in silk tights, nor an altar piece for an Italian church. Why waste time trying to imitate them? If I've any talent at all, I'd better develop it on subjects that interest me.'

"You know," Win went on, "that was a brand-new idea to me — it gave me quite a thrill to speculate about what I might become, if I gave up the idea trying to be like Lowell. Of course at first I thought Frank was a fool. I thought that it was a pity he did not have a background of solid culture. Me — with my little talent for plodding — pitying him! It wasn't till his 'Study in Moonlight Grays' won the Pittsburgh Prize and was bought for the Corcoran, that I began to take him seriously. He fascinated me. He was the first real live person I had

ever met. When he moved to New York, I came along."

He told her about their first years in the city, how they had found the Studio, and made friends with the Settlement crowd. He told her about his own work, the novels he had written, and the better ones to come. But most of all he talked about his friend.

At the time Eunice reached New York, Frank was not doing much. Six months before, he had finished his "Opus XLVIII." It had been a tremendous effort, leaving him utterly fatigued.

"It's terrifying," Win said, "this living with a genius. Such ups and downs—dizzying high ups and such abysmal downs! When that picture was finished, he went to pieces, lost interest in everything—got drunk! The critics were wild about it. Baldwin bought it for his private collection. But Frank would put his fingers in his ears, if he heard it mentioned. Utter exhaustion!

"I suppose real creation is always exhausting. A mother, they say, must rest a while from her travail before she can find energy to love the child. Perhaps that's why the great God has let this world of His run so amazingly awry. After the six days of His labor, He was probably too tired to care. When His long Sabbath has rested Him, He may begin to take an interest in what His creatures are doing. Anyhow, that's the way it was with Frank. It was months before he could paint again. Irene got him started at last on that Mother Goose frieze for her Kindergarten."

Such stories about Frank served to whet Eunice's desire to know him better, and at last the chance came when he asked her to pose for a poster he had promised the Drama League.

It was not so easy to get acquainted with him as it had been with Win. He was not a ready talker. Generally he had some brushes in his mouth and, when he did not, he conversed visibly, but inaudibly, with himself. To be sure he looked at her a great deal, but with no appearance of recognition. "He would look in just the same way at a bunch of carrots," she told Helen, "if he were painting a still-life."

But in spite of his conversational failings, Eunice did get acquainted with him. He was not always silent. Sometimes, during the rest period, he talked a little—never about himself, but always about something close to him. His favorite brand of colors; the best place to buy canvases; disconnected scraps about the technique of his art. Some of it was directly useful to her in her own work, and once a question of hers about perspective—a matter which always troubled her—set him off on a very helpful discourse.

Running through all his stray remarks, perhaps even more through his silences, was evidence of a very real devotion. No detail that affected the service of his goddess was beneath his serious attention.

"The artist," he said, "is nothing but a tool. He must grind his edges sharp. That's what people who don't know call 'drudgery.' No real artist ever called it that."—"A picture is not something

an artist does. The goddess does it by means of him."—— "The goddess comes only now and then. You can't tell when she'll come. So you must work hard — keep your edges sharp all the time. It would be awful to be dull if she came and wanted to use you.—— That's why I work hard on this poster, which doesn't matter — to keep my edges sharp."—— "It's a long time since the goddess has come to me. I don't want to get rusty."

But in all he said and did, his faith that the goddess would come again was implicit.

When the poster was finished, he tried to thank her for posing, but she cut him short. "It's been a favor to me. You see, I've never been to a school. I've never seen any one paint before. I've learned a great deal — just watching you."

"If that's the way you feel," he said, "come in any time. I don't like people about when I work, generally. But you've sense enough not to interrupt. Come in any time."

She took advantage of his offer and a habit was formed, which she valued highly. Two or three times a week, she would drop into his Studio for an hour or more. A very real friendship developed, and so it happened that Eunice was the first of the group to hear of Lillian von Lehrenburg.

She had come into the Studio one morning and found Frank, disheveled, in evening clothes, working furiously at some sketches. But for once he wanted to stop and talk.

"I've found her!" he said with intense excitement. "My next picture! Magnificent! Gorgeous! Not

even Leonardo ever had such a model! The goddess found her for me — she's come again. And — thank all the gods — I'm ready."

Eunice had never seen Frank so exalted. This was what Win had meant by his being "way up" and she wondered if it would be followed by an "abysmal down."

"She's not lovely," he said, walking about nervously, "nothing soft like that — beauty — sheer beauty! Teutonic. The marvelous Nordic blonde. I've always dreamed of it. One model has exquisite hands. There's a girl up at The Art Students' League with an almost perfect torso — but her skin coloring is bad. And the last model I had — her face was a joy to paint. So it goes — an ideal made out of patchwork. And now — suddenly — I find it — all embodied — full, queenly beauty — sovereign! And such marvelous symmetry. I never saw anything like the way her arms hang onto her shoulders — the sweep of them!

"Where did I find her? At a dinner party. I hate such stiff formality — I don't go to a dinner once a year. But last night — the goddess sent me — guided my footsteps. And there she was.

"Her parents were there, too, so I could get it all arranged. The mother's a fool — typical 'lady thug' — spattered with paste jewels — at least I think they were paste. She wanted a society portrait effect — hand on a Russian wolfhound and all that. But the old man has some sense. I'm to do just as I please. They're to come this afternoon. I dashed down here to get started. What do you think of these sketches?

"See. And here's a bolt of old brocade — cloth of gold. I saw it once in a shop window and bought it. Win was furious. I was awful hard up those days and he called it extravagance. But I knew it would come in handy. The goddess told me to buy it. It will make a wonderful robe for her. Square cut in the neck. A great braid over this shoulder — it emphasizes the curve of her arm. In one hand a crystal globe — a high light — gold in her gown — gold chain — and the gold of her hair. In the other hand an upright, naked sword — a straight and cruel sword. And a crown — just a band of graven gold. See, here's a design I've made for a chain to hang about her neck — flat, square links. I know a theatrical property man who will make just what I want. A necklace for the bride of Charlemagne.

"Oh! Do you see it? Her head bent just a trifle forward — gazing down into the crystal. It's *the Picture!*"

Eunice, never having encountered such excitement before, hardly knew what to say, but a practical suggestion, worthy of Helen, occurred to her.

"You haven't been in bed all night. You'll have to change your clothes. You'd best get a little sleep."

"Sleep!" he said scornfully, as though it were an utter impossibility. "But I guess I had best wash up a bit and get something to eat. Come to think about it, I'm famished. Oh! my friend," he said, twirling around on his heel in glee, "it's good to be at work again! — Don't tell anybody about it," he added as she turned to go. "I can't talk about it till I get well started. I haven't even told Win. I guess he thinks

I came home drunk. I wouldn't talk to him at all this morning.

Eunice asked if she could come in to watch him as usual.

"Wait a couple of weeks," he said, "till I get well into it."

Ten days or so later, Win came out of the Studio one morning and joined Eunice in the Square.

"Frank's at work again," he said. "It's just as it was when he was painting his Opus XLVIII. I have to feed him by hand — literally. If I did not stand right over him, he'd forget to eat what I bring. It's awful — awe-inspiring."

"He told me he had found a model. But"—she was surprised at Win's disconsolate tone—"aren't you glad he's at work again?"

"Oh, yes, of course; but I'm frightened. I'm only too glad to stand by and pour the coffee into him, bring him his lunch and all that. But I've been through it with him before. I haven't any fear for his work — it will be something marvelous — I'm sure of that. But I'm afraid for him. He's putting so much of himself into the job — there'll be precious little of him left."

"Have you seen the girl?"

"Just a glimpse. She doesn't matter — she's only what he calls a tool. But I really am worried about him. Nobody could stand such intensity, day after day, without any let-up. I wish you'd take a hand. I haven't any tact — it always rubs him the wrong way, if I butt in. But he likes you. Why have you stopped coming to the Studio? God knows I don't

want to interfere with his work, but I'm sure he could work better if now and then he thought of something else. Can't you come to lunch to-day? Fake up some problem about your work — anything. It can't do any harm — at worst he'll be rude. It might do some good."

Eunice considered this proposal a few minutes. Frank had said that she could come after he got well started. It would interest her immensely to see him at work on a great effort. Perhaps Win was right — it might do some good. And besides she had her woman's curiosity. She very much wanted to see this person who had stirred Frank so profoundly.

So at noon she appeared at the Studio with one of her "Tit, Tat, Toe, and Little Tot" drawings under her arm. Once more it was "perspective" which bothered her. Frank saw the trouble at a glance and righted it. While they were discussing this, lunch was announced. Frank was not at all rude, the meal went off very pleasantly.

"Would you like to see how it's coming on?" Frank asked, when the coffee was finished. Win, joyfully, escaped upstairs to his writing room. His little conspiracy was working well.

"Somehow," Frank said as he led her into the Studio, "I can talk to you. It helps. I get tired of talking to myself."

He had already made considerable progress. It was only scaffolding, but Eunice was enough of an artist herself to catch an intimation of what it was to be. He was keeping close to the design he had first shown her. There was no stumbling. "The

Picture" had come to him, whole, complete. He knew just what he wanted to do. He argued it all out with her. It was more of a lecture than a conversation. He was not asking any one's advice.

A few minutes before two, Mother von Lehrenburg and her daughter arrived. Eunice looked right past the mother. There was nothing about her to hold any one's attention. The daughter, as Frank had said, was quite wonderful. Larger than the average, she was nevertheless lithe and graceful. Her hair was almost as heavy as Eunice's, a shade or two lighter in color. The features of her face as well as her form were as nearly perfect as Eunice had ever seen. But there was one slight reservation in her admiration. There was something lacking in her eyes. It was not that they were ugly — just somewhat less beautiful than the rest. They made Eunice think instinctively of the blank eyes of a statue. "That's why he paints her looking down at the crystal," she said to herself, with sudden appreciation of his insight. "They won't show in his picture. It will be all beautiful."

The introductions were awkward, for Frank was not adroit in such matters. Lillian went to the dressing room to change into costume and Frank began laying out his brushes, so Eunice had to talk to the mother. Mrs. von Lehrenburg stared at her hostilely through her lorgnette. Her voice was harsh and nagging. Used to people who did not consider her very highly, she had become unpleasantly self-assertive. Eunice saw that Frank's estimate had been right, the jewels were paste. "She must have been beautiful, too,

once — *sic transit tyrannis.*” Eunice was fond of quotations, but a trifle weak in Latin.

When Lillian appeared in her crown and cloth of gold, Eunice’s heart almost stopped beating. “Why wasn’t she born centuries ago, when she might have been the queen of some great conqueror?” Seated in the high-backed Gothic chair, which Frank had gilded, the effect was regal indeed.

Frank stood and gazed at her a moment after she had taken her pose, then he beckoned to Eunice.

“Look,” he said. “Look at the shadows on her throat — and the texture of the skin on her cheek.”

A deep, angry blush broke over Lillian’s face; it spread down to her throat. She hung her head.

“Oh!” Frank groaned in vexation, “you moved. The pose was perfect. Can you get it again? Please. The chin a little higher.”

Eunice, although she blushed in sympathy with Lillian, was amused. Frank was utterly unconscious that the very objectivity of his admiration was almost insulting. “She might just as well be a bunch of carrots,” she thought, remembering her own experience.

Eunice felt herself *de trop*; her presence rendered Lillian uncomfortable and self-conscious. So at the first rest period, she slipped away. “I’ll not embarrass them again,” she said to herself.

Back in her own room, Eunice thought over the experience in great detail, as was her wont. She was most impressed by the obvious difference in the way that Frank and she looked at this beautiful person. He saw beauty; she saw a person. She doubted

if Frank had the least curiosity about Lillian's life and thoughts and ideals. To him she was a model, an amazing, thrilling thing to paint. But Eunice was immensely curious. She wondered how it would feel to know oneself so beautiful — for Lillian surely knew. She wondered from what soil, from what seed this marvelous thing had sprung.

Eunice, after this first encounter with Lillian, did not go again to the Studio. Once or twice, carrying out Win's suggestion, she asked Frank to come to lunch at the Flat to help her with her work. So she was kept somewhat in touch with his progress, and was not surprised when he called up on the telephone and said it was finished.

"I'm inviting all the crowd," he said, "for a private view — to-morrow afternoon — for tea — four-thirty."

Helen was a little delayed at her office that day, so the rest of the friends were already at the Studio when the two girls arrived.

Eunice, although she had followed its earlier stages, was completely surprised and overwhelmed by the Picture. It so much exceeded her expectations that she was reduced to an awed speechlessness. She sat down on a divan a little apart from the groups about the tea table. She heard only vague scraps of the conversation. De Pargt, the curator of the museum, and Baldwin, who had bought the Opus XLVIII, had been there earlier in the afternoon and Baldwin had bought it for the Metropolitan. This much Eunice heard of the talk, but she was too intent on the Picture to listen. She had a vivid feeling that now at last she was really acquainted with Frank.

Presently Helen came over and sat beside her. "What do you think of it?" Eunice waved her hands vaguely. Pantomime was a trick she had learned from the children. She could express very much more by gestures than most civilized adults.

"Of course, it's wonderfully good," Helen said, "but do you think he meant to give it that hard — almost merciless — tone?"

"Yes, I think that is just what he meant. He told me before he began that it would be beautiful — not lovely. There's a big difference."

Helen started to say something more, but there was a tumultuous ring at the door. Frank went to answer it. A loud, rather coarse, voice greeted him.

"I ran across De Pargt just now and he said you had something wonderful down here. Can I see it?"

"Bruce Lyons," Helen said disgustedly.

All of them knew Lyons, none of them liked him. He was a man shading toward fifty. He wrote popular novel serials in a magazine of a million odd subscribers. He put what he called "twang" into his stories, not the frank, joyous obscenity of Rabelais, but an indecently veiled salaciousness. He had the gift of words, of full-sounding, *huskily* sonorous words. His advertising methods were blatant and successful. He lived uptown expensively, with an expensive wife.

But this prosperous dealer in cheap vulgarities had once been young. Years ago, he had lived in a garret in Paris, trying to write the Great American Play. But of those years he never spoke and so Frank and Win could not understand why he sometimes came to the Studio and always overstayed his welcome. But

the explanation was simple; he immensely admired these two young men who had kept the faith, At times, when the din of his facile typewriter became unbearable, he would jump into his gaudy limousine and come down to the Studio to listen to their talk of the goddess, whose cult he had served in his youth — to worship, vicariously and from afar, at the shrine he had deserted.

The Picture stood on an easel directly opposite the door, so the unwelcomed guest saw it before catching sight of the tea party.

“Lord God Almighty!” he exclaimed. “It isn’t fair. You ought to warn a man. I’ve come in with my hat on.”

Snatching off his hat, he stood there a moment uncovered before the Picture.

“That’s her!” he said reverently. “The goddess! She’s been here, Frank, and has smiled on you. Good Lord! How I envy you!”

Then, turning from it reluctantly, he shook hands with the guests. He was noticeably subdued. As soon as he decently could, he returned to the Picture.

Suddenly he began blinking his eyes, but the tears, the foolish tears, could not be hid.

“You people despise me — and ought to! I didn’t like to be hungry. The mess of pottage smelt good. I never saw the goddess — face to face — as you have, Frank. I didn’t deserve to. But now and then — I caught some of the effulgence of her nearness — but — well — I wasn’t man enough! I haven’t any right even to look at your picture of her!”

Without a word of farewell, he grabbed his hat and rushed out.

"Well," Helen said, "he's the last man I ever expected to see get hysterical."

But to Eunice, sitting silent on the divan, this strange outburst seemed a poignant soul tragedy. Another thwarted life! It was only a variation of her own tragedy. In the old days in West Newleigh, she had longed for life in the vaguest terms. She had hungered for — she knew not what. She had had no clear picture of what life might mean to her if she were well. But since she had come to New York, since her talks with Win about literature, since her slow-growing friendship for Frank had ripened, life had come to mean for her something quite precise. The thing she hungered for was also the goal of their aspirations, The Holy Grail of their questing. If she had only been strong enough to stand the long hours before the easel, she, too, might have done brave things! "The Unknown Goddess." That was what she would always call this picture of Frank's. He had shown it to her — what life might be. She, too, would have worshiped at his shrine, if her weak body had not betrayed her. Even so this man, Lyons, had been betrayed by a weakness of the will. She was thankful for the failing light. In their eagerness to discuss the good news of Frank's sale, the others did not notice her tears.

About ten days after this private view, Win telephoned one evening to find if the girls were home. And a few minutes later he appeared, looking utterly disconsolate.

"Frank's going to marry her," he announced.

"The model?" they both asked at once.

He nodded gloomily and then a wry smile came over his face.

"I'm in bad. After I met her the first time, when he'd been working only a few days — I asked him how it was possible for such a beautiful person to be such a pinhead?"

Helen laughed, but Eunice said:

"She is stupid."

"That's the tragedy," Win agreed. "She's awful. This is worse than I feared, worse than getting drunk."

"You don't either of you know her well enough to talk like that," Helen said sensibly. "Frank is the only one who's seen much of her. He's marrying her — not you people. It's his affair."

"It is?" Win said combatively. "I'm not so sure. I'm blue about it, because I'm thinking of his work. That doesn't belong just to him. It belongs to all of us — to all the world. And marrying her won't help it. Why! He says he's going to stop painting and get a regular job as an illustrator — to support her! He's already starting on some drawings for Bruce Lyons' next thriller. It's tragic!"

All the evening they talked it over. Win told and retold all he knew and it was not much. He had been completely surprised by the news. There was nothing for him to do but accept the situation. Luckily, Lancaster was moving uptown, so Win piled his belongings on a cart and moved across the Square to share "The Diggings" with Pete McGee.

The affair seemed just as tragic to Eunice as it did to Win. She could not understand it. She did not take Frank's renunciation of painting very seriously — that was just weariness after the tense burst of work. But somehow, vaguely, she felt that Frank would never paint so well again. Something incalculable and irrational had laid hold of her friend and had twisted him out of his path, out of the road of his destiny. She was grieved, because she felt that in some indefinite way her friend had been lessened.

The marriage also disturbed the other friends. Lillian, the newcomer, was not welcomed. She did her best to be friendly, but she suffered from numerous handicaps. She was too ill-educated to talk intelligently on any subject that interested them. There was a fatuous self-assertiveness about her ignorance which made her simplest conversational efforts a failure. And she seemed to think that as a married woman she could speak with authority to the other girls. Worst of all, she was an idler. She was not even apologetic about it. She seemed to think that being adored was a sufficient occupation.

She would not have been tolerated by any of the friends, if they had not all been so fond of Frank. But he made it very clearly a case of "Love me, love my dog." They could not give him up, so they did their best to be at least formally cordial to her. What he thought about the situation, nobody knew. He gave no sign of any discontent.

As the months passed by, it became evident that,

far from helping Frank in his career, she was allowing him to go, artistically speaking, to the dogs. His illustrations of Bruce Lyons' novel were a marked success and one of the best publishing houses in New York was planning an extensive reprint of the English classics, in uniform and expensive bindings. The series was to be a *chef d'œuvre* of the bookmaking art; they decided that Frank was just the man they needed for the illustrations and signed him on for a five-year contract at five thousand a year.

The news of this contract came as a thunderbolt to the friends. The hostility to Lillian became passionate. This seemed a definite giving up of his mission in life. How could she have permitted it? Often behind his back they discussed whether he was happy. How could he be with such a woman — coarse-grained, petty, lacking in all ideals? Win, who saw most of him, was the most pessimistic. But their councils came to nothing except a general agreement that, if anybody could do anything, it was Eunice. They all realized that she had a surer touch with Frank than the rest of them.

“Why, there's nothing I could do,” she would reply to their vague urgings, but she continually turned the matter over in her mind. She was reluctant to interfere, but more than any of them she felt the tragedy of Frank's renunciation. Herself a mere illustrator, who mourned that she could not paint, she felt poignantly the meaning of his sacrifice. And so, at last, without telling any one that she had decided to act, she telephoned to Frank and asked him to come around and help her out of a tangle in her

drawing. But her easel was folded up against the wall, when he came.

"I lied to you," she said. "It isn't my drawing at all — that doesn't matter. I wanted to talk with you. Oh, it's impertinent — very personal — none of my business."

She noticed him go tense in a defensive, almost hostile attitude.

"Sit down a minute, please. It's this way, Frank. Doesn't affection give any rights? You must know how we all love you. Remember that line from 'Timon of Athens' — 'I am wealthy in my friends'? You're very rich. The first day I was here in New York, I was sick and Mary was taking care of me, telling me about the friends I would meet. 'Frank,' she said, 'you're sure to like him. Everybody does.' And so I've found it. You know we're fond of you. Win especially. He'd go through fire for you.

"And we can't care for you like this without being interested — in your work — in everything that happens to you. It isn't just gossipy curiosity. It's because we love you. And now we're worried — about this illustrating. We'd all set our hearts on your going on with your painting — on and up. Don't you see, Frank, I'm not talking this way just on my own account? — but it's all of us — your friends. Can't you tell us about it — so we'll understand?"

Frank got up and came over to the couch where she lay, took up her hand, and kissed it. Then he walked over to the window, etching designs in the frost, for several minutes. When at last he turned

there were tears in his eyes. He drew up a hassock beside the couch and took her hand.

"I don't deserve such friends." He shook his head sharply, as though to drive the huskiness from his voice. "But don't you understand? This is a thing you can't talk about. One doesn't discuss one's wife, even with the best of friends. I'm sure you know — you and the friends — that this is a matter between Lillian and me. I can't talk about it. But it's going to come out all right. That's what I want you to say when you tell them about this talk."

"They don't know we're having it. I won't tell them anything."

"No," he said thoughtfully, "I'd rather you did tell them. I don't want them to think I am snippy or unfriendly. Falling in love with Lillian hasn't had that effect. And you know" — he went on with quiet, sure emphasis — "*I am* in love with her. More now than the day I married her — or the day before. But it hasn't made me value my friends any the less. Only — well — you must all see it, so there's no harm saying it — I have a problem on my hands. A problem I must work out for myself. Lillian is different from you, from all my friends, different from anybody I ever knew. But I don't think you people are quite fair to her. She's never had a decent chance, she hasn't had the opportunities you people have had. Her mother seems to have been the big influence in her life. She's been taught standards of value that are different — wrong, all wrong. 'The Transvaluation of all Values' — that's my job, as I see it. I don't suppose it will be easy, but I'll

succeed. So much depends on success — everything for me!”

“As I said,” he went on after a long pause, “it’s my job — something I can’t let out to any subcontractor — however friendly. Marriages aren’t made in heaven, they’re made in the home. And these intimate things of the home — well — one doesn’t talk about them. I know you people’s friendliness. It’s wonderful — undeserved — infinitely precious. But there’s nothing you can do to help me in this job. Nothing but to trust me — to go on being friendly — to me and to her. Yes, that would help. The more she feels that you people are friendly, the easier it will be for me. She wants to learn our ways. And I want her to like you all.

“That’s what I wish you’d tell the friends only,” — he kissed her hand again — “I know you will say it so much better than I could. I’ve been afraid to say anything — afraid it might sound as if I were complaining. I’m not — not at all! Don’t let them think that for a minute. I couldn’t talk to Win — or the others, but — well — thanks to you.”

He got up and went again to the window. “This had to be said,” he remarked over his shoulder, “but I couldn’t say it without help. Thanks.”

In a moment he came back to the hassock.

“You and I are both wealthy in our friends. We all love you, too. I do. You are the newest — and best — of my friends and so I can talk to you a little more freely than to the others. You mustn’t worry about the illustrating. A few years — what do they matter? And loving — it’s really better than paint-

ing. Only it's more like sculpture — modeling — flesh and blood — and spirit — instead of cold clay. Think of me that way — working just as hard as you ever saw me work on a picture — harder. But the same old job — trying to make something beautiful — something for the goddess.

“Of course, I hate the illustrating. But it's just as in the early days — when I had to do chores to earn money for my paints. I was a waiter in a restaurant once. I loathed it, but that didn't matter — I earned enough to paint my first real picture — ‘The Study in Moonlight Grays.’ So now I have to do this chore — to finance the bigger job.”

“But couldn't you earn quite as much painting? That would keep your edges sharp. They'll get dull at this — dull and rusty.”

“Yes,” Frank admitted, “there's danger of that. But all the good work I ever did, I did for love. I can't spoil the devotions now by passing the collection basket. I couldn't take a fee from the goddess any more than I could charge a price for loving Lillian. It's different when somebody likes what you have done — done for love of doing it, done because you couldn't help doing it — and pays you for it, from sitting down to paint to order. No, I can't paint for money. Least of all now.

“Don't you understand? That's what Lillian and her mother want me to do. That's the standard of value she's learned from her mother — money. I'm trying to make her understand that one doesn't worship for pay. That's my job — to make her understand.”

Frank got up abruptly and started to go — as though he had said more than he had intended. But at the doorway, he turned back and came again to her couch.

“Of course, I can’t find words to thank you — you and the friends — for your interest. I know it’s kind. But I — Oh, I can’t say it! All I can do is to kiss your hand once more.”

“I don’t think Lillian would object,” Eunice said, “if you kissed my cheek.”

It was in 1908 that Eunice had come to the city. Within a year, Frank had married Lillian, a few months later, Mary’s doctor came home from Vienna and carried her off to California. On all sides, Eunice saw the handiwork of the most capricious of the gods. Herself too ill to dream of love as a personal adventure, she listened all the more eagerly to the stories others told her.

There was a young girl from the South — on the outer edge of their circle — who had come to New York to paint and had been distracted by a writer of verse, at once “libre” and libertine. Frank and Helen between them had snatched the arsenic bottle from her lips, lent her some money, and found her a job. She sobbed out all the details of this amorous misadventure to Eunice. Insisting that she had always despised the man as much as she had loved him, she lived in constant terror that she might encounter him again by accident and that he might beckon to her.

Then in contrast to this mad lark of Cupid’s, Lancaster and Irene — just when the excitement caused

by Frank's wedding was cooling down — announced their marriage. There had been no foolish whoop-de-doo about this affair — they had had the knot tied by a magistrate. They were rather boastful of the placid and quiet way in which it had been done. They did not like fireworks. Nothing was changed in their outward circumstances, Irene kept her maiden name, went on with her work, continued to live in the Settlement. In fact the only visible effect of the new arrangement was that it became impossible to find either of them free for week-end picnics. But behind this façade of casualness, in which they took an innocent pride, Eunice got glimpses of something vital and vibrant, some strange, new content to their lives which she could not wholly comprehend.

For the best part of every day she was alone, walking in the Square, working over her drawings, stretched out on her couch with a book. In these solitary hours, she very often thought over the love affairs of her friends. Love was something to mull over and ponder deeply. Just because her interest was so impersonal, it was the more acute. She read everything she could find on the subject, from Carpenter's "Love's Coming of Age" to Havelock Ellis.

Whether or not "Love is Best" she could not decide, but one thing seemed certain — Love is Strongest. No other force, which she could observe, seemed to her so tremendous. Even the stoutest personalities swayed under its pressure. Helen, usually so firm, so sure of herself, did not seem firm nor sure in regard to Pete. Eunice thought about these two very often. Was it a match? All the rest of the

friends thought it was, but she hoped not. For of all of Helen's friends, she liked Pete least. In this — as she would have admitted herself — she was less than fair to him — she knew him least. When he came to the Flat, it was so obviously to see Helen that Eunice had no chance to get acquainted. But she could readily see why Helen preferred him. Lancaster lived in the world of abstract ideas. Frank and Win had the artist's preoccupation with form. But Pete "got things done" — concrete, tangible things. His work — lobbying reform measures through the State legislature at Albany — was something Helen could grasp. Politics seemed more real to her than philosophy or literature or painting. But while Eunice could see that Helen liked Pete best, it was equally clear to her that Helen was very uncertain as to her personal relations with him.

Other things Helen could bend to her will, but this was something she could not control. Love was an unsolved problem for her. In all her comments on the amorous adventures of her friends, she showed her own uncertainty. She, so decisive in other things, was plainly bluffed.

There had been a long and great intimacy between them. During the fight for the Child Labor Law they had worked together constantly. And this fine, frank friendship seemed to satisfy Helen entirely. She was a partisan of the *Status Quo*. But clearly, it did not satisfy Pete. At frequent intervals, it was obvious to Eunice that he was "spoiling things" again.

Helen ordinarily rode on the floodtide of life. Things went well with her, and the success which

commonly crowned her efforts was always earned. She threw herself whole-heartedly, untiringly, into every job she undertook, and she stuck to it till it was finished.

She was blessed with a better brain than most people, direct, incisive, quick at grasping essentials. It had been well trained at college and, sitting at the feet of Experience, she was learning all the time. Above all she was not hasty nor rash. She believed in thinking things out in advance. She had learned that it pays better to have an idea a month that works out, than a dozen a day which go wrong.

Her optimism was not of the fatuous — “God’s in His heaven, all’s right with the world” — kind. She found the world appallingly wrong, but she had a firm faith in the possibility of putting things right. It seemed to her only a matter of will and skill, of persistent, intelligent effort.

“Spot has entire faith in the last act,” Pete said jeeringly, at one of their gatherings. “She’s not discouraged by the complications of the earlier scenes. The industrious Dramatist always invents a *dénouement* — an untying. And Spot — although she will deny it — has faith that the Great Dramatist, who sets the scene on this world stage of ours, will pull off a final curtain which will make the universe applaud.”

“Rubbish!” Helen had retorted. “I’m not relying on any Great Dramatist to do our job for us. Your comparison is all wrong. Stage people are only puppets — reciting the lines the author has given them. But we’re not puppets. We have wills of our

own. I do have faith in the last act — not because of any Beneficent Dramatist — but because we can impose our wills on the tangle — untie it ourselves.”

“I am the master of my fate,” Pete chanted, “the captain of my soul.”

“Well, aren’t you?” Helen demanded. “I am.”

But if Helen were the captain of her soul, it seemed to Eunice that her hand on the rudder was singularly wobbly and uncertain, when it came to steering a fixed course in regard to Pete.

At times Helen came home on a low tide, more or less in the dumps, certainly at odds with life. And Eunice knew that Pete had been “spoiling things” again. For a year or more they had no conversation on the subject, but at last her curiosity got the upper hand.

It had been a silent, moody supper. Helen had had almost nothing to say.

“What’s the matter?” Eunice asked. “Has Pete been proposing again?”

Helen laughed assent.

“Does it show?” she asked.

“I can generally tell.”

Helen talked of other things through the rest of the meal. But, although she had laid out some papers to work after supper, she abruptly turned away from them to talk.

“I don’t understand it. I don’t understand him. And sometimes I don’t understand myself.”

After this sweeping announcement of her fallibility, she lit a cigarette and made herself comfortable on the foot of Eunice’s couch.

"It isn't a thing you can reason out."

This statement also was a very sweeping departure from her ordinary point of view and she hastened to qualify it.

"At least we don't know enough about this business of falling in love to be sure of our reasoning. There aren't any good textbooks. What's the difference between friendship and love? All we know is that there is a difference — a big difference.

"Now, I like Pete — better than any man I know. I know him best. I know him well — all except this love side of him. I don't understand that — so I'm frightened of it.

"I like to be with him. I like his talk — he's really serious behind his fun-making. Above all, he's a wonderful fellow to work with. When he wants to be, he is a perfect friend. But every once in a while he has a brain storm — spoils everything."

"But," Eunice put in, "you ought to know your own mind by this time. Are you going to marry him?"

"No," Helen said it sharply, without any qualification in her tone.

"No, I'm not going to marry him.— I know what you think," she went on. "If my mind is made up not to marry him, I ought to send him packing. That's the storybook solution. But why should I? Of course, I would be an awful cad if I gave him any encouragement, but I don't. I've told him, a hundred times, that I don't care for him that way. I do value his friendship — immensely — but I've never asked him to hang around.

"I don't like the storybook solution. It's too simple — and the problem isn't simple. After all, we're grown-up people. We have our work to do. Shall I resign from The Child Labor Committee, just because he thinks he's in love with me? Shall I ask him to stop working for the law — so I won't have to see him? Shall I ask him to move away from New York and give up all his friends here, because the sight of him offends me? It doesn't, you know. Or shall I cut loose and look for a job in Chicago?"

"No, that seems to me foolish. I put it up to him just as straight as I can. And as far as getting married goes — there's nothing doing! I say to him — let's accept that fact — forget it — go on with our work together, our solid, fine, old friendship."

"What does he say?" Eunice asked.

"It doesn't matter what he says," Helen replied wearily. "One time he says this — the next time he says that. Sometimes he's fine about it — shakes hands in good-fellowship and all goes well — for a while. Sometimes he storms and rages — storms out of the room and goes off to Albany for a week or so. But pretty soon he comes to his senses — full of apologies and good intentions — and things go smoothly again for a while. But it doesn't matter what he says. Pretty soon he gets moody and dejected — oh, I can see it coming. I do the best I can to prevent it, but he breaks out again. And it takes it out of me. To-day it was fierce."

Eunice kept breathlessly still, in breathless curiosity.

"My cigarette's gone out," Helen said, getting up

for a match. She walked nervously, puffing to get the light well started. "It was disgusting!" She stopped in front of Eunice. "It makes me mad — to get stirred up like this. It's so senseless. He came into the office just before closing time and as soon as the girls had gone he broke loose. Worse than usual — a lot! I suppose some one had been telling him — 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady, ho' or such rot. Perhaps he'd been reading a Jack London caveman story. Anyhow that's the way he acted — tried to carry things by storm! It was so idiotic!

"This time I'm really angry. I suppose I'll just have to make up my mind to it — that a woman can't have decent friendships with men. It's *tout ou rien* with them. Just because I don't want to sit in his lap and be pawed over, I must give up this old friendship. It makes me sick!"

"But don't you want to get married?" Eunice asked. "Ever?"

"That's the funny part of it," Helen said, sitting down. "Of course I do. When I was a girl I didn't like children. Now I wish I had some of my own. Sometimes I want very much to get married.

"It really *is* funny. There was one time — just before you came to New York — I nearly did marry Pete. But it wasn't love — it was just loneliness. I went up to Vassar to speak before their Civic Club during Commencement Week. I'd never known I was sentimental before. But, one night — well, the Five Year Class was having its reunion on the campus. They had a sheet up between two trees. The committee had had magic lantern slides made from the

photographs of the girls' families. And each girl had to get up when her pictures were thrown on the screen and make a speech — introducing her family to the others.

“Of course it wasn't my class. I didn't know any of the girls. I sat out on the fringe of the crowd and watched. Some of the girls were silly and the speeches they made about their husbands and children were sickening. One girl was already a widow and broke down completely when her husband's picture appeared. But most of them had — or pretended to have — joyous stories to tell. Each married woman seemed very proud of 'her man.' They were condescendingly superior to their classmates who hadn't married.

“And somehow — well — it got my nerve. It made me — sitting there by myself — appallingly lonely. It frightened me. Here was I, from the marrying point of view, letting my best years go to waste. I had a terrifying picture of myself as a lonely old maid — nobody caring for me — a cat and all that. And the babies in those lantern pictures looked very wonderful.

“Well, I had to catch the earliest train in the morning so it wasn't worth while going to bed. I sat up what was left of the night out on the campus, under the trees. I almost made up my mind to marry Pete. If he'd only known what was going on inside of me then, he might have had me.”

“You speak — almost regretfully.”

“No, not at all! As I said, it was only loneliness. Pete missed his chance and I got over it. It was a

strange sentimental fit that came and went. It wasn't Pete. Why, I'd have almost married a policeman that morning — or the black Pullman porter — any one who asked me. I was so lonely. It wasn't love. No, not at all! It would have been awful if I'd married Pete."

"So," Eunice summed it up, "you don't want him, but you do want to marry somebody?"

Helen nodded an unenthusiastic assent.

"It isn't quite so simple as that," she said. "Marriage in the abstract doesn't smile to me especially. That fit of loneliness passed. I'm not afraid of the future. But I would like to care for some one — really love some one."

"Well, then," Eunice said, "I hope Pete disappears."

Helen looked a question.

"It would give Win a chance. He thinks you're engaged to Pete."

"Oh, pooh!" Helen sniffed. "Win doesn't care for me — not that way."

"Win's fine," Eunice said.

"Yes. A fine friend."

"But you said you did not believe men and women could be friends."

"That was foolishness. I was discouraged — thinking of Pete. Win's different."

Eunice did not look convinced.

It was something of a shock to Eunice when Pete dropped in to dinner one night a week or ten days after this talk. He was unchanged, as merry, as unconcerned as ever. It was more of a shock to her to

see that Helen accepted the renewal of diplomatic relations as though nothing had happened.

In this matter Helen was obviously less decisive, less sure of herself, than usual.

For more than four years — and it had been going on before she came to New York — Eunice watched, with acute curiosity, this strange friendship between Helen and Pete. She could see no progress, no “getting anywhere.” It became her regular little joke, whenever Helen looked depressed, to ask: “Has Pete been spoiling things again?” Generally Helen nodded a gloomy assent.

In the spring of 1913, Pete became suddenly and noticeably rarefied. He explained that he was very busy in Albany. He was seldom in the city and rarely stayed overnight when he came. As much as three weeks would pass without his appearing at the Flat.

“Is he really getting tired at last?” Eunice asked herself. “Or is he trying to make Helen miss him?” She watched her friend closely, but could see no indication of her feeling. Early in September the news exploded that Pete was engaged to a Miss Grace Caldwell, the daughter of a State senator in Albany. Helen was the only one of the friends who took the news calmly. She said that she had known for a long time. But it was weeks before she would talk to Eunice about it. She had never been so uncommunicative before, and at last Eunice, unable to stand the silence longer, asked Helen if she knew the girl.

“Oh, yes, slightly. She’s a little ‘pink face,’ a Dresden doll effect — ‘nobody home’ sort of person — utterly stupid. Her mother tries to be the

Madam Roland of the Progressives — tries to run a political salon. Every one laughs at her and Grace is worse — just out of finishing school. I'm sick about it."

Still Helen seemed reluctant to talk and changed the subject; but, after Eunice was in bed, she came and sat with her a while.

"Of course everybody thinks I'm jealous," she said, "but I'm not. God knows I could have married him, if I'd wanted to. But I can't help feeling bad about it. Perhaps it's a good thing for him. He seems pleased. Perhaps I ought to rejoice with him, but I can't, she seems such a fool. In a way I suppose I am jealous — just as Win is so jealous of Lillian. It means losing a friend, the best friend I ever had. Grace and I could never be friends — and besides, Pete, like a fool, told her that he'd been in love with me. She's afraid I'll try to pry him loose! She'd raise a horrible squawk, if she should hear that I was having lunch with him. No, he's a total loss, no hope of salvage. And he has meant so much to me."

Helen could think of no more to say on the subject and went dejectedly to bed.

So the Fates had dealt with Eunice. An ogre held her captive in a grim tower. She could look out through the grated windows of her narrow cell on the people outside, who were engaged in the real processes of living, and from time to time they brought her stories of their adventures in the great open spaces beyond her sight. In West Newleigh she had lived mostly in the children; here, in New York, she lived through Helen and her friends. Her con-

tact with most of what is the reality of our life, had always been indirect and secondhand.

Into this world of hers, the Stranger — from a world so different — wandered in the week before Thanksgiving in the year 1913.

CHAPTER VI

THE FLAT

Helen had fitted up a workroom for herself in the apartment she shared with Eunice. Her regular office was in the Charities Building on Fourth Avenue. But often when she did not want to be disturbed by the routine work of directing her staff, she spent the afternoon at home and there she sometimes made appointments.

On the Thursday, after the Stranger had been introduced at Win's breakfast party, she was sitting in this private office with Mrs. van Loo, the president of "The Association for the Aid of Tubercular Children." She was refusing the proffered position as financial secretary of the Association.

Mrs. van Loo was a large woman. She would have looked motherly if she had not been so elaborately and expensively gotten up to appear young.

"The board authorized me," she said, "to offer you thirty-five hundred. But we want you very much. I think — this is unofficial, of course — but I think we might arrange four thousand."

"It isn't the salary, Mrs. van Loo," Helen said. "I couldn't honorably throw up my present job till the work is well organized. And I'm promised to the National Housing Association as soon as I'm free."

I'm hopelessly tied up. But I know just the person for you — Mr. Yates. I picked him out when I first joined the Child Labor Committee as an able fellow. He's been my right-hand man ever since. I don't like to lose him, but I can't pay him more than two thousand and he's worth more. You couldn't do better."

Eunice, dressed in her street clothes, opened the door of the Flat and came down the hall past Helen's little office.

"Oh, Eunice," Helen called, and then to her guest, "excuse me a minute, I have a message for my roommate, Miss Bender."

"Is it Eunice Bender, the artist? Oh, I'd so like to know her."

"Eunice, let me introduce you to Mrs. van Loo."

"I'm so glad to meet you!" Mrs. van Loo said effusively. "You've no more devoted admirers than my children, I'm sure. When I tell them I've seen you, they'll be wild with excitement. And do you write the verses, too? They're so fine for children, they're so easily learned. My three know dozens of them by heart. And — the funny things — they're always asking me to get them a new little brother like Little Tot. But I think three are quite enough for a busy woman. Don't you? Too much I think sometimes."

Mrs. van Loo's talk was so fast that it gathered great momentum and drove past commas and question-marks and periods without noticing them.

"And there's no one, Miss Bender, who does more to bring joy to my larger brood of crippled children.

In every children's hospital in the city, they know Tit and Tot and all of them. You'll have a new book for this Christmas, won't you? And, oh, I wonder if you could make a Christmas card for me? Especially for the little cripples — something about Tit, Tat, Toe, and Little Tot coming to visit them in the hospital — and Santa Claus? I could have them printed and sent with my presents to the poor kiddies. And if you could only go the rounds with me some day. You'd be surprised to find how they all know your name. It would make them so happy. Would you?"

Eunice was very tired and noticeably pale. This vehement unparagraphed discourse winded her. But she leaned up against the door jamb and smiled valiantly.

"I'll do the Christmas card for you, Mrs. van Loo. I'm glad the youngsters like my work. But I'm afraid I can't visit the hospitals with you. I'm not any too strong myself."

"No," Helen said, "Eunice isn't up to that. She has to be very careful."

"Oh, I'm so sorry to hear it. You don't look very well to-day. I hope it's not serious —"

Mrs. van Loo went on in voluble and vacuous sympathy. She really was sorry, but it did not sound so. She had sympathized with sick people too often to do it convincingly. Such talk was always painful to Eunice, so she interrupted.

"I've been fighting with my publishers this afternoon and I'm very tired — so I'm afraid you'll have to excuse me.—Helen, can I speak to you just a moment? — I'll do the Christmas card for you, Mrs.

van Loo, and don't forget to give my love to the children."

"No, indeed. They'll be so pleased. I'm very glad to have met you. I *do* hope you'll be better soon."

Helen walked out in the hallway with Eunice.

"I'm all in. Tell Jennie to bring me some tea and toast for supper — in bed."

"Oh, Eunice, do you have to go to bed? That Mr. Lane is coming in to talk about costumes for Thanksgiving. Lillian telephoned that she would bring him over about nine."

Eunice considered this a moment.

"Well, I'll lie down till dinner time anyhow."

"To get back to business, Mrs. van Loo," Helen said, as she rejoined her guest. "I can very cordially recommend this Mr. Yates. You see, I've practically brought ——"

"Does Miss Bender ever do portraits of children? I'd like to have her paint mine. They'd love it."

"I never knew her to do portraits, but I'll ask her. As I was saying, I've practically brought up Mr. Yates. I've trained him. I know the people available for such work and you can't do better. Twenty-five hundred would be a fair salary to start him on."

For a few minutes they haggled over terms.

"Brains cost money in charity, just as they do in business," Helen said, "but they more than pay for themselves. He'll double your income."

And so, at last, it was arranged.

As soon as the door had closed on Mrs. van Loo, Helen went to Eunice's room.

"I'm tired, too," she said, tumbling onto the foot

of the bed. "My! That van Loo woman is a scatter-brain. Can't keep her mind on one subject ten seconds. By the way, she wants to know if you'd paint her children."

"Not if they're as noisy as she is!"

Eunice was stretched out on her bed. She put her hands over her eyes. Plainly she did not want to talk. The sight of physical suffering always distressed Helen, she would have much preferred to slip away. But she was convinced that solitary meditation on her ills — what Dr. Riggs called "moping" — was the very worst thing for Eunice. And persistence, insistence, had been the formula of Helen's success as a social-service financier.

"What were you fighting with your publishers about?" she asked.

Eunice, having learned from long experience that it was easier to submit to Helen's determinations, pulled herself together to reply. They talked about contracts and royalties, about Mr. Yates and Mrs. van Loo till it was time to dress for dinner.

When, later in the evening, the doorbell announced the arrival of Lillian and Mr. Lane, Eunice, in a soft clinging gown of blue and not looking tired any more, was reading. Helen presented a striking contrast. She wore a smart, crisp evening dress, which looked starched but was not. A picture of spruceness and health, she was sitting at the center table working on a folio of business papers. She gathered them into an orderly pile, but left them in plain sight as she turned to welcome the guests.

"Oh, girls!" Lillian burst out. "Mr. Lane is per-

fectly wonderful! He can get all the costumes from 'The Caliph's Daughter.' It has just finished its run."

"Are you connected with the theater, Mr. Lane?" Helen asked.

Her question was so brusque that he started and stammered. It would be hard to imagine a person who had less of the assured Broadway look.

"Oh, no! But there were some Moors — 'supers' in the play — from the Anghera Hills. I did some interpreting for them. There was no one at the French consulate who knew their dialect. They were quite bewildered — caused a good deal of trouble to the management — till they found some one to speak for them."

"That's the best part of it," Lillian said, with growing enthusiasm. "He knows those people. The musicians and acrobats. He says some of them can cook — give us a real Persian supper."

"Moroccan," Lane protested.

"And the property man," Lillian ignored the correction, "is going to lend us the tent from the third act — it will fill about half of the Studio. And Mr. Lane's Armenian friend has rugs and cushions and everything. But the costumes are the best! You remember that wonderful creamy and scarlet gown with the umbrella skirt? The Caliph's daughter wears it in the second act. He's going to get that for me!"

She did not wait for the applause this drew to die down.

"And that black and gold thing the favorite wife wears in the finale — you'd look stunning in that,

Helen! It would just about fit. And for Eunice — I can't quite make up my mind. Frank says the old gold dress — the one the girl who recites the prologue wore — would suit you best. But I can never see why you wear old gold. I should think with your hair you'd choose more of a contrast. But it don't matter. You can have whatever you want. There are heaps of costumes for you and Irene to pick from. Isn't it gorgeous?"

Lane was pleased that they were pleased. He tried to enter intelligently into these discussions of dresses, but was plainly in deep water. However he was quite definite in siding with Frank about Eunice's costume. He was sure that the gown of old gold would be becoming.

"And if you want the feast to be really Oriental," he said, "we must have a story-teller. There is a very good one with this troupe. He can't speak English, but I could interpret."

"Won't all this cost a good deal, Mr. Lane?" Eunice asked. "You must promise to let us all share the expense equally."

"It will cost very little. I could not pay the Moors, if I tried. They are all foolishly grateful. I only went up to the theater now and then to smooth out their difficulties. It was not much, and I found it interesting. But they think it was a great deal. They will be glad to do it for me."

"Well, if that's so," Helen said, "let's have the dancing girls, too. They're so typical."

"I am afraid we had better not ask them," Lane said.

He blushed slightly, in evident confusion at her suggestion. Helen did not like opposition.

"I don't see why not."

"Really," Lane stammered in embarrassment, "I — well — you see, the men, the musicians, they would think — well — in their country such girls only dance before men — not before ladies."

"But here," Helen persisted, "they do it every night."

"It does not matter what they think of the women in the audiences. But I would not like to have them think ill of the ladies I know — as they do of the women who come to public places to see vulgar dances."

"What rubbish!" Helen snorted. "I suppose they think we're abandoned hussies because we don't wear veils"

"Oh, no!" he said, quite seriously. "They think it is a strange custom not to wear veils. They think your men cannot care much for you — to let you be seen so by all the world. But they are wise enough to know that there must be many chaste women in any country — even among the naked black folk of Africa."

This rather overwhelmed Helen. It almost silenced her, but she could not forego a last word.

"I don't see why we have to worry about their silly prejudices," she said.

"I'll arrange it, if I can," Lane said, bowing submissively.

Further discussion of this point was averted by the arrival of Lancaster.

"Seeing you saves writing a note," Lillian said as the greeting subsided. "We're going to have a Persian dinner on Thanksgiving night. And we're counting on you and Irene. Mr. Lane is arranging the costumes for us."

"All right," Lancaster said, rather ruefully at the idea of such frivolity. "I suppose Irene will want to come."

And then, having had his own reason for coming to the Flat, he went directly to it.

"I've just been around to your rooms, Mr. Lane. As you weren't there, I looked in on Mathews, found Frank there. He said you were here. I've wanted to get acquainted, ever since Inslavsky ran off with you last Sunday. I'm very much interested in the Revolution in Russia. I heard him call you '*Tovarish*'—and that means 'comrade.' Tell us about it. How did you meet Inslavsky?"

Lane evidently was reluctant to answer. He glanced about from one to another as if looking for help.

"Perhaps you had better ask Inslavsky. I do not know—I am not sure that he would want me to tell. I was only in Russia a short time. I do not know much about the Revolution. Inslavsky could tell you so much more than I."

He was more embarrassed than ever by the awkward silence. Eunice came to his rescue with some small talk about costumes. They discussed plans for Thanksgiving until Lillian left with Mr. Lane.

"He's a queer person," Lancaster said to the two girls. "He can't be much interested in the Revolu-

tion — or he'd be in touch with the comrades here and know that he didn't have to distrust us.

“I heard a great yarn about him yesterday. I was up at Cambridge arranging for Inslavsky's speech to the students. I had lunch with Petroff, he's to preside at our meeting and he's head of the Department of Semitic Languages. He knows Lane — discovered him in fact. It's a weird story.

“Last year Petroff went to Morocco on the trail of some Arabic manuscripts. When the Moors were driven out of Spain they took their books with them. And up at Morocco City, the old capital, Petroff succeeded in getting admission to the library of the university — it was a famous school in the old days. And there he found a native scholar, named Kassim, who knew all about the manuscripts. After talking Arabic for a couple of weeks, this ‘native scholar’ began to speak English and turned out to be Lane. Petroff says he was born out there — the son of a missionary. He dressed and lived like the natives — passed himself off as a Mohammedan. But as soon as he found out that Petroff was really in earnest, really knew his subject, he became quite friendly.

“Petroff says he knows more about Arabic and kindred languages than any white man alive. He tried at once to get him to come to America. It seems that Lane did not want to come at first. Petroff used some queer bait to land him. There's a language called ‘Shilah,’ which the mountaineers speak in the High Atlas. It's an unwritten language, so it's hard to study and nobody knows much about it. But Lane knew it well. It seems that a German faker had made

a great stir among Orientalists by publishing a Shilah grammar. It was all wrong — a bluff. It made Lane so angry, when Petroff showed it to him, that he came to America — on the Harvard Oriental Fund — to publish a true grammar. Petroff says it's the most important contribution to comparative philology that's been made in decades — clears up a number of obscure points about the relations between Phœnician, Hebrew, Arabic, and other Semitic languages.

“When Lane finished the grammar he came here to New York to work for the Oriental Society. He's getting out an anthology of Shilah folklore and poetry. Petroff is enthusiastic about him — says that at last America has an Orientalist to be proud of. And it's strange — he never told Petroff that he'd been in Russia.

“It makes me sore to think that he's been living here, within easy reach, and I didn't know him. I could get so much from him for my book on ‘Coöperation among Primitive Peoples.’ A man can't know so much about languages without knowing a good deal about ethnology. I —”

“I'm afraid I'll have to go to bed,” Eunice interrupted; “I'm awfully tired.”

As she got up from the couch, she staggered slightly and went pale. Lancaster jumped up to steady her.

“It's nothing,” she said, “a little vertigo. I'm all right — only tired.” And shaking off his hand, she walked with fair steadiness to the door. “Good night.”

“Is she worse?” Lancaster asked.

Helen shrugged her shoulders in perplexity.

"I don't know. I'm afraid so. You'd best run along, so I can help her to bed."

And when she had let Lancaster out, she went quickly to Eunice's room.

"I'm afraid you oughtn't to have stayed up," she said.

"Oh, Helen, dear. Please! Don't you suppose I know I oughtn't to have stayed up? Don't rub it in!"

And Helen knew, from the petulance of Eunice's voice, that she was unusually tired.

CHAPTER VII

THANKSGIVING

One end of the Studio was hung with an imitation camel's hair tent. There were divans on three sides and a wealth of stage-property cushions sprinkled here and there with real ones from the Armenian's curio shop. There was an arabesque cloth hung like a wainscoting about the angle of honor. And on the floor was a wonderful Atli rug of soft blues and old rose tints, which Lane had brought from his rooms. A canvas drop curtain, painted after the Bokhara design, but much larger than any real Bokhara rug, hung across the room before the open end of the tent and shut off the bare half of the Studio.

Beyond this curtain, a group of Moors squatted on the floor about some earthenware stoves, where, over glowing charcoals, some strangely smelling foods were cooking. Lillian, who, in spite of the sumptuous costume of the Caliph's Daughter, looked anything but Oriental, was watching them.

"Is everything ready?" she asked a Moorish *taleb* in flowing white, who, in spite of his ready English, did not at all resemble the Lane of American clothes.

"Just a minute," he replied. He gave some final directions in the guttural dialect of the Anghera Hills.

"All right," he said. "We will bring them in."

He pulled aside the imitation rug and they passed into the space before the tent.

"Oh! It's beautiful," Lillian said gleefully.

"I suppose it is the best we can do here. But those Japanese lanterns with the electric lights ——"

"Candles," she interrupted with finality, "would be too dangerous."

She opened the door into the parlor.

The merriment which had sounded through stopped suddenly. Lane bent low as the guests entered, welcoming them with the Arabic greeting — "*Salaam aleikum*" — "peace be upon you."

"Oh!" — "Ah!" — "Fine!"

"Where's Mr. Lane?" Helen asked.

"That's him — he bowed you in," Lillian laughed.

They all turned and looked at Lane, who, in real Moorish clothes, did not begin to come up to their idea of Oriental gorgeousness. Among their stage costumes he looked rather like a field daisy mixed up in a chrysanthemum show.

"Let us sit down," he said, awkward as usual, when he felt himself the center of attention.

Win, remembering how the Caliph did it in the theater, shook off his slippers as he stepped on the fine old Atli rug. Lane did so as second nature. The others, noticing them, followed suit, with much merriment.

"I suppose we ought to sit down cross-legged," Helen said.

"Oh, be comfortable," Lane urged. "That is why we have so many cushions."

A grinning little black boy about ten years old,

with a red fez cocked rakishly on one side of his shaven head, came in from behind the curtain with an elaborately chased brass bowl for hand-washing. Lane called it a "*tass*." He washed first to show them how, and then, one after another, they held out their hands and little black Ahmed poured on them the warm, rose-scented water.

He removed the *tass* and returned with a low, round table laden with tea things and set it down before Lockwood.

"What do I do with this?" he asked.

"Oh! The host always makes the tea—it is the strictest etiquette. You see the traditional way to get rid of your enemies is to poison their tea. If the host seemed anxious to make it, the guests would be afraid. So you must urge each of us to make it—to reassure us. But it would be very rude for any of us to accept the task—it would show that we did not trust you. So in the end the host always makes it."

"But I don't know how," Frank said. "We'll have to trust you."

"Not a very cheerful custom," Irene said, "beginning a meal with the fear you may be poisoned." Long association with children in the capacity of teacher had given her an assertive, positive manner of speech. "I wouldn't like the East. I suppose there's a frightful lot of dirt. Fancy! Eating with one's hands!"

"Yes," Lane admitted. "There is a great deal of dirt—not the kind you are used to here."

"That's one on you, Irene," Lancaster laughed.

"When we think of New York City and all the filth of the slums — where the great mass of our people live — we haven't any right to throw stones. We've an East of our own — the East Side."

Lane was afraid it would hurt Miss Penton's feelings to be laughed at.

"I did not mean to make a joke," he said. "But I do not think it any dirtier to eat with your fingers, which you have just washed, than with a fork, which a careless servant has washed — perhaps. And going into a house with your shoes on — after walking in the street. You are accustomed to that and it does not seem dirty to you — but of course it is. It shocks us."

Little Ahmed, coming in to remove the tea outfit, addressed Lane in Arabic. Win pricked up his ears.

"What did he call you?"

"Hadji Kassim — that's my Moorish name."

"But 'Hadji' is a religious title, isn't it?" Win asked. "I thought it meant a person who had been on the pilgrimage. Have you been to Mecca?"

"Yes."

"Have you, indeed?" Lancaster exclaimed. "I want to hear about that some time. I've read Sir Richard Burton's account of his trip to Mecca. But aren't these people angry about it? I thought they were very bitter against any outsider going to their holy cities."

"But I'm not an outsider. I'm a believer — a Mohammedan."

"You don't wear a fez," Lancaster said.

Lane was embarrassed, not by the cross-questioning,

but by having to talk of himself. He tried to turn the conversation lightly.

"I don't believe God cares what fashion of hats we wear."

"This interests me," Lancaster persisted. "I thought the Muslims were very fanatical about such things."

"Some of them are — just like some Christians. Not very many years ago they burned people at the stake in Russia over the question of whether the priest should make the sign of the cross with three fingers or with the thumb and two fingers. There are foolish fanatics everywhere. But I am quite sure that God is not a foolish fanatic. Do you not agree with me?"

"Now, for an argument," Win said dolefully. "Lancaster doesn't believe in any God."

Ahmed caused an ineffectual diversion by bringing in a steaming dish of *kous-kous-soo*. There was a pyramid of white meal, its sides inlaid with a formal design of carrots and beets, with a stewed chicken atop.

"Defend your lack of faith, Lancaster," Win said teasingly.

Lancaster did not want to alienate Lane by making fun of his beliefs, but he could not resist Win's challenge.

"You really believe in God?"

"Yes," Lane said quite simply. "In my God — Allah. Not in the God of the Jews, who sits on a throne — a man-god with 'a right hand,' who got vexed at his creatures and cried over their sins,

drowned them in a flood of his tears — cried, as the Jewish books say, till his eyes were sore. Not in the Christian God — who had a son.”

“You won’t find many people nowadays,” Win said, “who believe in the anthropomorphic — man-god — with hands and feet and sore eyes.”

“I don’t believe in any kind of a God,” Lancaster said, “with or without sore eyes.”

“Nor I,” Helen put in.

“Are you not sorry sometimes?” Lane asked. “I would be. I do not suppose any one can believe in God all the time. We have to stop to sleep and eat and do so many little things. But it is very good to believe in God when you can spare the time.”

“Well,” Eunice said, to steer out of the argument, “let’s stop philosophizing and eat a little. Do you eat this, too, with your hands?”

“Yes. And *kous-kous-soo* has its etiquette, too. No matter how clever your disguise, nor how well you spoke his language, you could not fool a Moor, unless you know how to eat *kous-kous-soo*. First, the host pulls off a piece of meat like this and offers it to the most honored guest, who sits at his right. I will offer it to you, Miss Bender — as you are at my right — so. And the host says — ‘*Bis-m-illah*’ — ‘In the Name of God’ — a blessing. And you must say — ‘*El-hamdu-l-illah*’ — ‘Praise be to God’ — a thanksgiving. And you must take it with your right hand — the left hand is an insult. Then every one takes a handful of meal — like this. You can make a ball of it — see. Try it, — no. It is difficult. It takes much practice. We will have spoons. *Ahmed!*”

"It certainly tastes good," Win said.

"What do the poor people eat in Morocco?" Lancaster asked.

"Oh, everybody eats *kous-kous-soo*. The rich Kaïds, of course, will have chicken with it — or a piece of meat. The common people have to be content with partridges or quails."

"What a topsy-turvy land," Eunice laughed. "You have to be very rich here to have game birds."

"With us, the boys catch them in snares. They don't cost anything."

While they were eating the *kous-kous-soo*, an orchestra of four pieces appeared. One had a small, tall drum, which he beat with his hands. There was a reed flute and a "ginbri," a minute sort of mandolin. The fourth musician had a "*r'bab*," the instrument on which Win had heard Lane play. The four men, after bowing to the company, stood up, held out their hands as if holding the Holy Book, and recited a verse from the Koran.

"What's that?" Eunice asked.

"The Fatihah — like your Lord's Prayer. Only it is all thanksgiving — not begging bread. I will translate it.

"Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures,
The most Compassionate of the Merciful,
King of the Day of Judgment,
Thee do we worship and of Thee do we ask guidance.
Lead us in the True Path,
In the way of those on whom is Thy Grace,
Not in the Path of the unrighteous
Nor in that of those who have gone astray."

"You see," he said, "it is a prayer of praise — and this is your Thanksgiving Day. Now they will sing a '*keemjad*' — an address of welcome."

While they were singing, Ahmed brought in a casserole — lamb, stewed in oil, with seeded grapes and olives. He was very awkward in handing about the knives and forks. He did not know how, and Irene, who was squeamish in such matters, noticed with horror that as often as not he picked up a knife by the blade — in his black fingers. She decided that after all there was something to be said on behalf of eating with one's own hands.

Frank dished out a plateful and handed it to Helen.

"What is it I should say?" he asked.

"*Bis-m-illah.*"

"And I?" Helen asked.

"*El-hamu-l-illah.*"

"What do you call this dish?" Irene asked.

"*Tajeen.*"

"I must say," she said, "I like their cooking better than their music. This *tajeen* is as delicious as the noise is discordant."

"It is not really discordant," Lane protested, "only your ear is not used to such fine shades. You have made all your music rigid to fit your piano — the octave — everything just alike. You could not play that on your piano. There are twelve intervals equal to your eight."

"I don't catch so many."

"No?"

He took the *r'bab* from the player and asked Irene to give him the scale.

"Good!" he said, as she sang the do, re, mi. He struck the high and low c. "Now, listen."

He ran up the duodecimal scale. Handing the instrument back he spoke a few words of Arabic to the performers.

"They will sing the Hamadsha funeral chant. It isn't meant for instruments. You can get so much more delicate tonic value out of strings than you can from the voice. It is a chant. The marching song of those who carry the coffin. It is in one of the Gregorian modes. Your ears will catch the tones."

The voices of the musicians did not have the timbre to which we are accustomed, and the rhythm, especially the weird insistence of the drum, was unusual, but the melody was octaval and enough like our own to allow its peculiar beauty to be felt by Western ears. "Why," Win said, "there's a movement to that which sounds like Handel."

"Yes," Irene admitted, "that's better. Much!"

"It sounds like a song of victory," Eunice said.

"Well, with us, we look on death as a sort of victory."

Ahmed, who had taken away the *tajeen*, came back with the *tass*, and when they had washed their hands again, he brought in a tablecloth, held up by the four corners like a bag, and threw it open on the rug. There was an amazing potpourri of white cookies, oranges, nuts, bananas, cranberries, tuberose, and carnations.

Ahmed came again with a censer of frankincense, which he swung about till the tent was heavy with the pungent and exquisite scent. Then with a bundle of

fragrant grasses he sprinkled them with rose water from a silver bowl.

The orchestra struck up a "Streets of Cairo" tune and a slim and graceful dancer, barefooted, in gaudy, electric blue silk trousers, a red sash and burnt orange bodice, hung with heavy, clanking silver jewelry — anklets, bracelets, ponderous earrings — clattered into the space before the tent and began the *danse du ventre*. Whether the dancer's face was pretty or not, it was quite impossible to tell. It was overlaid, almost masked, with paint, scarlet lips, a spot of carmine on each cheek, the eyebrows heavily exaggerated with antimony.

Helen from the other side of the tent nodded a "thank you" to Lane.

"I thought you weren't going to bring a girl," Eunice whispered.

"Do not tell," he replied, winking slyly. "It is a boy. I had a hard time persuading him to dress up like a girl and dance before women. Do not tell Miss Cash. . She would be disappointed."

When the dance was finished, Ahmed brought in a wide brass tray, covered with tiny cups of coffee and cigarettes. An old, white-bearded, venerable, wizened Moor in an immense turban came in and bowed profoundly. Lane rose to return his salutation respectfully and offered him a cigarette, which he lighted for him.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said, "allow me to present Sidi Bobker bin Abd-el-Khader Azroor. He is a professional troubadour and story-teller. No Moorish banquet would be complete without some

stories, so I have invited Sidi Bobker. Of course the best of his stories are too long for me to translate without tiring you. I have asked him for short ones.

“And, with your permission, I will ask the other Moors, who have been serving us, to come and listen. It is the custom — and they enjoy it very much.”

Little black Ahmed, who was Sidi Bobker's slave, produced an immense tambourine, nearly three feet across, and, squatting down on his heels, beat a most intricate tattoo. The other Moors — including the lad, who had danced and who had quickly washed the shame from his face and had put on again the garb of manhood — sat about in a semicircle. Lane threw them handfuls of the mixed dessert and cigarettes.

When all were in place, Ahmed stopped his racket. Sidi Bobker stood up, spread out his hands in the attitude of prayer, recited the *Fatihah*, and invoked the blessing of his patron saint, Sidi L'mdoog.

The Moors roared with laughter as the old man told his tale. A queer glint came into Lane's eyes. It was a mixture of embarrassment and of amusement. Sidi Bobker had no sooner started, than Lane had realized that he could not translate this story. He knew enough of American life to understand that such droll tales could not be told to ladies — except in intimate privacy. Although thinking hard to escape the embarrassment of the situation, he was mightily amused at the contrast in conventionalities. Sidi Bobker, who disapproved of unveiled women to such an extent that he would not look at their faces, was blissfully unconscious of any indelicacy in describing their more intimate charms.

"I am sorry," Lane said, when the story was finished. "It is impossible to translate. All the wit of it is in play upon words. Although you do not like puns, my people are very fond of them. Anyhow puns lose their point when translated! But please laugh a little so the old man's feelings will not be hurt. He would think me very stupid, if he knew I could not translate."

Luckily a slow-witted Moor suddenly caught the point of one of Sidi Bobker's jests and exploded in a roar of laughter which was infectious.

"I will ask him for another story," Lane said. "We will hope for better luck this time."

Sidi Bobker bowed in acknowledgment of the compliment implied in the request for another effort. Little Ahmed made the tambourine roar for a moment and the old man began again.

"*Ay! Ay! El-hamdu-l-illah!*" the Moors ejaculated in solemn approval.

"This is not a funny story," Lane said, as he began his translation. "It is — well — religious."

"In the land of Makaïnfain, which means in the land of nowhere — like your 'Once upon a time' — there lived a poet, Khamedo, and he loved a maiden named, after the Prophet's wife, Khadijah — on her be the peace and favor of Allah.

"One evening the young man, Khamedo, went to the house where Khadijah dwelt alone. He knocked on the door. The voice of his beloved answered:

"'Who is there?'

"'It is I.'

"'There is no room within but for one.'

“Khamedo went apart into the mountains to consider this hard saying. For many years he wandered over the face of the earth seeking wisdom. He made the Hadj, he visited the holy shrines of Irak and Turkestan. And everywhere he sang praise of the beauty and virtue of Khadijah. He made her fame resound in the four great courts of Islam and even in the lands of the Unbelievers. After many hardships by hill country and plain, by desert and sea, he returned to his own country. He was worn by his wayfaring — rich only in wisdom.

“He went once more to the house where Khadijah dwelt alone. He knocked on the door and once more the voice of his beloved asked:

“‘Who is there?’

“And he answered:

“‘I am Love, I am thou. We three be One.’

“And his Beloved opened the door — for truly the water and the cup and the drinker are One.”

“I don’t see the point of that,” Irene said, as Lane dropped his voice, evidently at the end of the story. “What has the water and the cup to do with it?”

“That is only another way of saying that Love and the Lover and the Beloved are One. It is a mystic formula — an emphasis on Monotheism. It is a typical Eastern story in its attitude toward Love. Khadijah would not open her door to the individual Khamedo, but she welcomed Love. The man had no significance by himself — as a person; it was the Love he brought which she welcomed, to which she opened her heart. She welcomed the chance to approach, through Love, the Oneness, which is God.”

"It's too deep for me," Helen said.

"It is strange," Lane continued. "Evidently this story does not appeal to you. But it is one of the most popular in Sidi Bobker's repertoire — for my people. To us, the principal ills of life come from our separateness — our 'individuality,' as you call it. We suffer because we are isolated — exiled from God's Oneness. And Love is most wonderful, because it offers escape from this separateness, this homesickness — this imprisonment in our little selves. Love leads out from ourself to another and so brings us nearer to the ultimate Unity. You Westerners love people, and we, loving Love, are grateful to the person who stirs Love within us. It is a deeply religious idea to us.

"One of our poets, Jami, the Persian, has said:

"‘Drink deep of earthly love, so will thy lip
The wine of Heaven’s vintage learn to sip.’"

And Abou Saïd, also a Persian, a greater man and a greater poet than Omar, has a rubaiya in the same strain. It is something like this:

"‘O Most Beauteous One,’ I asked, ‘to whom dost thou belong?’ She replied to me, saying, ‘To myself alone. For I am One. Equally am I the Love, the Lover and the Beloved. Alike am I the mirror, the beauty and the vision.’"

"Of course those are poor translations of an idea which is common and very beautiful to us. We cannot understand your ——"

The doorbell, ringing lustily, interrupted him. Frank got up amid protests.

"Don't let any one in."

"We don't want to be disturbed."

But Frank shook his head hopelessly as he came back.

"It's a young man in a fez," he said. "He doesn't speak English very well. I couldn't take his message. I guess you'll have to talk to him, Lane. He mentioned the Persian consulate."

Lane went out in the parlor to talk with the interrupter.

"I'm so sorry," he said, when he returned. "It seems to be my fate to be always taken away. A poor man is in trouble. Perhaps I can help him. I must go"—and then to Lillian—"it has been most kind of you, Mrs. Lockwood, to include me, who am a stranger, in your Thanksgiving celebration. I have enjoyed it very much—knowing you all. I thank you."

"Thanking us!" Frank protested. "Why, we're no end obliged to you. We all thank you for this treat. We're sorry you must go. What shall I do with these chaps? Can they find their way home alone?"

"I will tell them."

"And thank them for us, please," Eunice said. "We are sorry you have to leave. But we'll see you again."

"Thanks."

After giving directions to the Moors and telling Lillian that he would come back in the morning to help her clear up, he thanked them all again and said "good night."

CHAPTER VIII

THE NEXT MORNING

The next morning about eight, Helen, in her dressing gown, a newspaper under her arm, tiptoed to Eunice's door and silently pushed it open.

"How are you this morning?"

Eunice always dreaded the question. She disliked to lie and she disliked to admit her ill feelings. She shrugged her shoulders under the bedclothes.

"Are you too tired?" Helen insisted.

"Oh, no. Just very tired. I don't sleep it off as easily as most. I'll be all right. What's the news?"

"News? Our friend, Mr. Lane, has a column and a half in the newspaper."

"Not about us?"

"No. He didn't tell where he'd been. Here it is — the headlines — '*Arabian Nights Entertainment in Jefferson Market — the grimness of the Night Court touched with Oriental color.*' I'll skip the first part — it's supposed to be a funny story. It seems that a man who couldn't speak English was brought in for a row with a ticket chopper in the subway. The regular interpreter thought he was Chinese. The Chinese interpreter thought he was a Turk. The Turkish interpreter said he was Persian. A man

came from the Persian consulate. He couldn't talk with the prisoner, but said he knew a man who probably could and he set out to find Lane. I'll read:

"About midnight there was a craning of necks near the door and in came an Oriental potentate in flowing white robes. He was led up to the bar.

"Can he speak English?" Judge Black asked.

"Yes, your Honor," he answered for himself in the purest English.

"What's your name?"

"Donald Lane."

"Why do you wear such outlandish clothes?"

"I have just come from a fancy dress party, your Honor. Is it against the law?"

"Can you interpret for this man?"

"I do not know. I have not seen him."

"He's said to be a Persian. Can you speak Persian?"

"I can get along in three or four of the languages they speak in Persia."

"Call up the defendant."

"As soon as the poor chap was brought in—he was much frightened, not knowing what it was all about—Mr. Lane spoke up.

"He is not a Persian, your Honor. He is a Kirghese from Turkestan. He is a Russian subject."

"Do you know his language?"

"Not well. But he probably speaks Tatar. Shall I try?"

"Tell him he is accused of disorderly conduct in the Bleecker Street subway station."

"At the first word in a language he understood the Kirghese broke away from the policeman who was holding him, let out a yell which was probably meant for joy, threw himself on the floor, and began to kiss the hem of Mr. Lane's fancy dress.

"Tell him to stand up," the judge ordered.

"Mr. Lane helped him to his feet and talked with him for a minute.

“““Come, come! We’ve wasted too much time over this case already,” the judge said. “Is he guilty or not guilty?”

“““He does not know what such words mean, your Honor. There was some misunderstanding over his ticket——”

“““He admits being in the subway station at the time mentioned in the complaint?”

“““Naturally. That was where he was arrested?”

“““Naturally won’t do in law. I want to know whether he admits——”

“““Your Honor, he does not know the name of the station. He has told me already that he was in a station. There are two men here, the policeman and the subway guard who arrested him. If you cannot believe them, I will ask him to describe the station. But he is very much confused, your Honor. He does not understand why he was beaten.”

“““Oh, that’s what they always say.”

“““That it happens often, your Honor, does not make it any easier for him to understand.”

“““He probably showed fight.”

“““Yes, of course. But he was unarmed—what could he do against four or five? He is too much excited to talk coherently. If you want the truth, let me take him into another room for a few minutes and I will get his story.”

“““That isn’t regular procedure.”

“““Then, your Honor, I will have to let your regular interpreter attend to the case. I do not care to take part in the further prosecution of this man. He has not been proven guilty of anything. But he was beaten in the subway by the guard and a policeman, manhandled in the station house and again here.”

“““Well,” Judge Black said, “I’ll make an exception in his case. Take him into my chambers. See what you can do.”

“Now, what do you think of that, Eunice? He’s a queer fellow, isn’t he? I never would have dreamed that he’d dare to talk back to a judge like that!”

“It doesn’t surprise me,” Eunice said. “I think

his embarrassed manner is due to us. He's not used to women. But I don't think he'd be afraid of men. How did the case turn out?"

"Oh, the judge discharged the man in Lane's custody. Of course it was all a mistake. He was a horseback rider, come over from Buffalo Bill's show — separated from his friends. You can read about it after I'm gone. Will you have your coffee here? Good! Stay in bed and get rested. I'll dress and have mine in here with you."

Helen, leaving the paper, went to her room. Eunice sat up, crammed some pillows behind her back, and read about the Stranger, while Jenny, the Jamaican maid, brought in a little table and laid it beside the bed. Soon Helen, dressed for her office, came back. She poured out the coffee for both of them.

"This fellow Lane is certainly queer," she said, "but he interests me."

"I like him."

For a moment they were silent and then Eunice spoke again.

"While I've been lying here awake, I've been thinking about that story the old man told. And the more you think about it, the better it is."

"It didn't make much of a hit with me. I don't go in for this esoteric, mystic business. I've too much to do, too many real things to attend to, to waste time over such things. And Oriental love stories — well, there's always something hothouse about them — smell of the harem — polygamy and all that."

"There wasn't anything polygamous about that

story," Eunice protested, "just the opposite, it struck me."

"Well, perhaps." Helen's mind was evidently on some other aspect of the case. "I don't know, but all that incense, the tuberose, sort of went to my head, made me feel sickish. I didn't pay much attention to the story. It's too bad that he's so wrapped up in the East. If he'd had a more normal life, he might be a fine fellow."

"He wouldn't be so interesting, if he was just like everybody else."

"Why, you don't mean to say it's an advantage to be queer. It's an immense handicap."

"Perhaps."

"Certainly. Somebody ought to take him in hand and knock this Oriental nonsense out of him."

"Are you thinking of taking the job?"

"Me?" Helen asked with a start, then a laugh. "Oh, Lord, no. I'm too busy to take on any personal reformations. But, well, I might find a spare moment now and then. I'm sure he has a lot to him if it was only brought out. All he needs is a little steering. The queerest thing about his is his calling himself a Mohammedan! I can't help thinking that's a pose. It is hard enough nowadays to find educated people who really, honestly, believe in Christian theology. I can't imagine any intelligent person accepting all that Oriental superstition. I wonder where he found those queer collars. It would be a kindness for some one to point out to him that it doesn't pay to be queer. It's the worst reputation a person can have."

She looked to Eunice for confirmation. But Eunice's eyes were closed. She felt a strange reluctance to discuss Lane with Helen.

"It really would be a kindness," Helen insisted.

Eunice did not argue. And Helen went off to her day's work.

Left alone, Eunice thought over Helen's threat of reforming Lane. The worst of it was that in all their long friendship, Helen had always succeeded in accomplishing what she set out to do.

"Why can't she leave him alone?" Eunice asked herself.

When Helen had said, "He interests me," Eunice had replied, "I like him." There was a vast difference between these two verdicts. There was also a vast difference between the facts that while Helen had hurried off to a very busy day in her office, Eunice spent the morning in bed.

She thought over all her men friends. She needed a standard by which to judge this Stranger. She did not know many men well. All her friends were secondhand. They had been Helen's first.

Best of all she liked Win. It was a red-letter day for her when he called and Helen was out. Now and then, when he knew she was sick, he would come and sit by her bed. She enjoyed immensely his talk of books and of his dreams. She knew he liked her. And at times she had dreamed a tiny daydream about what might have been if she had been well. Perhaps if only she had been granted normal vitality, her strong fondness for him might have developed into this tumultuous thing about which books are written and

poems are sung. This was the nearest she had ever come to Romance. Never in all her life had she been able to escape from the fact that she was not well. It stood square in the way of so many "might have beens."

In some ways she felt even closer to Frank. He also liked her and came frequently to advise her about her work. Never but once had they talked together of fundamental things, but between them there was the fellowship of thwarted dreams. She had not been able to develop her talent beyond a children's toy. She, of all the group, saw most clearly into Frank's silent-tragedy. He also must have dreams to match his talent. There were his pictures in the Metropolitan and the Luxembourg. A few years ago there had been no painter in America with half his promise. But Lillian had stopped all that. It was not necessary for them to talk together. Now and then Eunice caught in his eyes an infinitely sad, far-away look — and understood. They each realized that the other's heart was not at all in the little tasks of everyday. They shared together homesickness for the Forests of Arden, the exile's longing to see again the Vale of Tempe, the heartbreak of those who have been excommunicated from the Rites of the Most Beautiful Goddess. But of such things we may not speak.

Lancaster, she respected highly, but his perpetual air of great occupations tired her. And Pete McGee, well, now that he was leaving Helen alone, Eunice missed his gay laugh. She had liked him more than she had thought.

But, quite definitely, she knew that she liked this Stranger better than any of them.

Why couldn't Helen leave him alone? The bitterest thought, as she lay there in bed, was the certainty that, if Helen set her mind to making him over according to her own specifications, she would succeed. She always did. And the reformation of Lane was the first of her projects in which Eunice did not wish her success. So generally had she approved of her friend's activities that Eunice was genuinely surprised at her own feeling in this matter — surprised to find herself longing to warn him, to urge him to escape before he fell into the toils.

Helen's mind, as she rode uptown to her office, was also preoccupied by the Stranger. Was it worth while for her to take a hand in his affairs? She rather thought it might be. And, it did not occur to her to doubt — any more than it did to Eunice — that she could succeed, if she set her mind to it. But once in her office, all thought of him was driven from her mind by the pile of work on her desk.

CHAPTER IX

THE STRANGER'S STORY

A few nights after Thanksgiving, Lane, as he was coming home to his rooms, noticed a light across the hall over Win's door. He hesitated a moment, as though considering a momentous question, and then knocked. The door was opened by Pete McGee, whom he had not seen before.

"Oh, I beg pardon," Lane said. "I wanted to see Mr. Mathews."

"Come in. He's here."

Lancaster was there, too. He had come to read the manuscript of the article Win had written about Inslavsky. They both jumped up to greet Lane.

"Glad to see you," Win said cordially.

"So am I," Lancaster chimed in. "When can one find you at home? I've knocked at your door a couple of times — but no answer."

"My name is McGee," Pete said. "These gentlemen with their accustomed politeness fail to introduce us, but I gather that you are Mr. Lane, the Man of Mystery."

"Yes. Lane is my name. I am glad to make your acquaintance. But I did not know I was a Man of Mystery."

"You didn't? Well, you don't realize your assets. Sit down. Have one of your estimable cigarettes —

we're all smoking them now. And I'll put the case to you.

"I've been playing around with this crowd for a dozen odd years. I go up to Albany for a few days and come back to find them all talking about a new-comer, who — count one — plays an outlandish musical instrument and looks down with pity on us who know no better than to like pipe organs and violins; who — count two — worships a strange god, although his father is reported to have been a Christian missionary; who — count three — speaks English fluently and a dozen other unfamiliar languages equally well. Let's see — you are charged with knowing four or five dialects of Arabic, Berber, Armenian, Tatar, Persian, and Turkish, that's a rather mysterious assortment of tongues; and who — count four — is greeted by a Russian revolutionist as comrade and also speaks that language, which I forgot to mention; and — count five — owns Aladdin's lamp, claps his hands, and produces a full-blown Oriental banquet in a New York studio. Now if all this does not constitute a Man of Mystery, I don't know what the phrase means."

Lane was a bit dazed by this long bill of indictment, but, as Eunice had said to Helen, he was not at all afraid of men. Besides he had decided that he wanted to be friends with these people. On the whole he was amused at the speculation he had unwittingly aroused.

"I am afraid I must plead guilty to an unusual facility for languages," he said apologetically. "But it really is not my fault. I seem to have been born with it. All the rest is commonplace enough. I am

sorry I did not make it clear at first. I read in a book on etiquette that it was not good form to talk about oneself. But if you are interested, I will tell you my history."

"Go to it," Pete said.

"And don't make it too brief," Lancaster put in.

"The night is young yet," Win added.

"Oh, do not worry. There is nothing in my story to keep you up late. My life has been very interesting to me, but I do not think it will be to others. I do not know exactly when I was born — a little more than thirty years ago — in Marakesh — 'Morocco City,' your English maps call it. My parents had gone there as missionaries. My mother died when I was a baby. I do not remember her. My father, who was a doctor, died when I was about fifteen. He never told me about my childhood, so I am vague about that. Perhaps I had been baptized a Christian. I do not know. But long before I can remember, my father had become a Mohammedan. In my earliest recollections, we were Muslims. I went ——"

"If you don't mind being cross-questioned," McGee interrupted, "I'd like to ask about your father. It isn't often that a missionary embraces the religion he started out to combat. Why did he change?"

Lane considered a moment.

"I am not altogether sure myself. You see I was only a boy when my father died. It seemed so natural to me to be a Mohammedan — I did not know any Christians — that I never asked him about it. And yet I think I understand.

"As I remember him, the reality of his religion

was a passion to help people in pain. He was like Abou Ben Adhem, in your poem, he loved his fellow men. I do not know why he first went out as a missionary. Perhaps he had heard that there was a great need for doctors in Morocco. Perhaps my mother, whom he loved very much, was more devout.

“When she died, my father did not want to leave her alone in a strange land. He often said he wanted to be buried beside her. And when he had decided to live there all the rest of his life, I think he felt that he could serve his fellow men better, that he could have a greater influence for good, could more easily cure the ills of their bodies, if he were really one of them. And so he became a Muslim. At least this is how I think he felt.

“It would not seem so strange to you, if you knew Mohammedan countries. In the Levant there are many native Christians — Armenians, Syrians, Greeks, Copts, and Bulgars. When the missionaries there find that they cannot make converts of the Mohammedans, they turn to these native Christians and do much good for them in their hospitals and schools. Most of the missionaries I have known are good people. I imagine that they find it easier to be Christians among us than here in America. In the East, we respect all people who sincerely try to find God, even if we think they are on the wrong path.

“But in Morocco there are no native Christians. The missionaries in Marakesh have a few orphan boys and girls in their school, but when I was there last they had only one adult convert — and I do not think they are very proud of him. They have a doctor

there now; he tries very hard to do good. But the people will not go to him because, in such very bad Arabic, he tells them things about their religion which are not true. Even here in a Christian land, I do not think that you would go to a doctor who was more interested in your soul than in your stomach or your sore finger or whatever it was that was hurting you."

"You needn't deal tenderly with the missionaries," Win said. "We don't subscribe to foreign missions. We're trying to put our own house in order."

"There is another thing in Morocco which perhaps influenced my father. Outside of the half dozen missionaries, there are very few decent Christians. I think that if you had to live there — after you had got to know the Europeans — you would not like to be called a Christian. They are dishonest merchants, their word cannot be trusted, and they make vice an open show in our streets. And also they are drunkards. My father was a great believer in temperance. And our people never touch alcohol — except in the coast towns like Tangier, where contact with Christians has debauched them. My father often spoke to me of that.

"I do not know just what was in my father's mind when he went into the mosque to pray. I think religion is more a matter of feeling than of reason. If a person has thought about theology till he has lost faith in the God of his childhood, I doubt if he will ever believe very deeply in another god. I do not know whether my father was a really devout Muslim. Perhaps he had been a sort of Christian Agnostic and

became a Mohammedan Agnostic. He was too much of a scientist to give much weight to dogmas. It did not matter to him what people he served nor what they believed. He was glad to help them with what skill and instruments and drugs he had.

“As I said, I do not know whether he was exactly orthodox in his theology. But as far back as I can remember he was a *Maraboo*, a saint. He did good to every one and every one loved him. Even now — even in far-away corners of the mountains — I am sure to be treated kindly because I am my father’s son.

“There is a legend among the people that he was buried beside his wife. He was not. But many people come to her grave to pray. It is, perhaps, funny, Mohammedans praying beside the tomb of a Christian woman. But it makes me very proud of my father.

“He always spoke English to me and taught me to read and write. He intended to send me to America to study medicine. And I went to the school of his *Zawia* ——”

“What’s a *Zawia*?”

“Oh, there are many sects in Islam — somewhat like your religious orders. My father belonged to the *Khaderia*. They are followers of Muley Abd el-Khader el-Jilani, a saint who lived in the twelfth century of your era. He is the patron of beggars and all who are in need. He was a good deal like St. Francis d’Assisi. Each chapter house — *Zawia* — has a school for the children of the members. They are not very good schools, only the language and the Koran.

“So I learned the classic Arabic at school and the

Marakesh dialect from the boys, and my foster-mother was a Berber woman from the Sous Valley. The book I am now working on is a collection of the songs and stories she taught me. The Berber folklore is very interesting. Long ago they worshiped a female deity — the Astarte of the Phœnicians. They are a Semitic people. Many of their epics and stories have a heroine instead of a hero. Of course that was long before they became Christians."

"Didn't you say that there weren't any native Christians?" Win asked.

"Oh, there are none now. The Berbers were Christians under the Roman Empire — for several hundred years before Mohammed was born. But by the end of the seventh century of your era they were converted to Islam.

"When I was about fifteen my father took me on the Hadj to Mecca. Almost all the Christian books on Islam speak lightly of the Pilgrimage. It seems strange to me that you, who make so much of conventions — hardly a day passes when some of you do not rush off to a congress or conference, sometimes half-way around the world — it is strange that you do not understand how important the Pilgrimage is to us. It is the General Assembly of our Church, a Parliament of Nations for political discussions, a conference of savants, a tournament of poetry, all rolled into one. It is the strongest unifying force of our civilization. I think it was the wisest and most statesmanlike thing our Prophet did for us.

"It was at Mecca that I first became really interested in languages. I met boys whose speech I could

not understand. I learned a good deal of Afghan from one of them and from another some of a language I have never been able to identify. Perhaps it was some obscure, unstudied Malay dialect.

“The plague was bad that year — worse than usual. On the way home there was an epidemic in one of the Syrian ports. I do not remember which one, nor how we got there. Of course we stopped. Father, being a doctor, had to. There were some missionary doctors also who came to fight the plague. They were the first people, besides my father and a man on the street in Cairo, with whom I had ever talked English. I suppose father told them who he was. Anyhow, when he caught the plague, he asked them to take care of me and give me an education. He always wanted me to be a doctor.

“He died there. It was very sad; he could not be buried beside my mother.

“I do not remember very well what happened after that. I did not care. There was almost a fight between our Moorish friends and the missionaries over who should take care of me. I did not want to go with the strangers. But my father had wished it, so I did. They took me to their school at Beirut. They were very good to me. I remember especially one woman — so kind! — like a mother, I suppose. I do not remember my own. But they tried to make a Christian of me. I was only a youngster, about fifteen. I thought my father was the best and wisest man who had ever lived. He was a Mohammedan. All the people I had ever known thought it was horrible for a Muslim to become a renegade. So, as they

would not let me alone, I ran away. When I got to Constantinople ——”

“Hold on,” McGee interrupted. “How did you get to Constantinople? I don’t suppose you stole the foreign mission funds to buy a steamer ticket, and you haven’t told us yet about finding the Magic Carpet.”

“Oh, now,” Lane protested, laughing. “You must not look for mysteries. It is the easiest thing in the world to be a tramp in the East. Especially returning from the Hadj. We have no laws against vagrants. It is permitted to beg. You can sleep in the mosques and nearly everywhere I would find a Zawia of the Khaderia. And sometimes I worked. I went overland across Asia Minor. I suppose it took me about six months to get to Constantinople.”

“And there I fell into luck — a job, as guide, for a family of American tourists. It was funny. Constantinople is a big city — the largest I had ever seen. I did not know my way about, but on the road I had picked up a good deal of Turkish — enough to ask questions. Every morning I would go up to their hotel. Perhaps they would say that they wanted to visit the mosque of Akmet. I had never heard of it. ‘Yes,’ I would say, ‘Alonce, verree queek.’ I was afraid to speak good English in those days for fear they would try to make a Christian of me. I would put them in a cab and get up beside the driver and on the way I would ask him to tell me about the Mosque of Akmet. They never suspected how little I knew about Constantinople.

“One day they wanted to go out to Robert College on the Bosphorus. I had heard about it at Beirut.

I did not forget that my father wanted me to have an American education. So I asked a good many questions. When my tourists found out I was interested they gave some money to the college — like a scholarship. So when they left Constantinople I went there."

"Is it a good college?" Pete asked.

"Oh, yes. Like any college, like Oxford or Harvard — good, if you want to learn. Very soon I saw that I could not be a good doctor, I was so much more interested in languages. Latin was hard, because you have to learn it out of books. But Greek was easy — there were several Greek boys in the college. And Bulgarian and Armenian also. And there was a Jew from Salonica. I learned Spanish and some Hebrew from him. And of course German and French. I read all the books I could find. I liked mathematics, too. I have quite a reputation among my people because I know algebra and geometry and a little about the stars."

"Didn't they try to make a Christian of you there?" Lancaster asked

"A little, not much. They did not know about my father. I told them I had learned English, being a servant in the American consulate in Tangier."

"How long were you there?"

"Five or six years. Since then I've wandered about a good deal. I went to England once. In India, I met an Englishman who was writing a book on Persian literature. I had come to India by way of Persia. I am very fond of Persian poetry. Some of his ideas were all wrong, but he was not a fool.

He wanted it to be right and asked me to come to England to help him. He was a professor at Oxford. I spent nearly a year there. I made some corrections in the catalogue of the library — the Bodleian. Also a little work in the British Museum. But I did not like England — London, not at all. So I went to Egypt — studied for a while in the Al Azhar University in Cairo. Then I went up into the Sudan. I wanted to see the land of the Black People and learn their language. I came back through Tripoli and Tunisia. I stopped more than a year in Kairwan — there are some very precious manuscripts in the library there.

“Then I went back to Marakesh, my old home, three years ago. I did not expect to stay, just a visit to make some inquiries about my father. But I found it very pleasant in Marakesh. Many of my father's friends are still alive. They were glad to see me. They were afraid the missionaries had made a Christian of me. And I found that my father had owned the house where I had been a boy — it has a very beautiful garden. Also there is a farm in the High Atlas, which the Kaïd of Glawi had given him — all waiting for me. Every one urged me to stay. The fattened calf tastes very good, even if one does not deserve it.

“Last year Professor Petroff of Harvard University came to Marakesh. He is a fine man, a real scholar. He wanted me to come and do some work with him. I had some curiosity to see the land of my father and mother, and I had the habit of roaming, so I came.”

"Do you like it?"

"Not much. No, I must be truthful, even if it is impolite. I do not like it, but I want to stay a little longer. I do not want to go away until I understand America better."

He lit a new cigarette and puffed at it for several minutes.

"It is very interesting, but I do not understand your life at all. You have so many things to make you happy — but you do not seem happy. So many comforts — but you do not seem comfortable. It is especially your women. I do not know many of them. A few servants, a few professors' wives. They seem sad to me. And also the women in your books.

"Even your kitchen maids know so much more than our women. They ought to be — but I do not think they are — happier. I do not think they make the men who marry them as happy as our women do, either."

"Evidently, you are not thinking of marrying an American girl," Win said.

"No," Lane laughed. "Anyhow, they would be afraid of a Mohammedan. They have been scared by the stories of our harem which the missionaries bring home."

"Now, if you want to remain single, Mr. Lane," Pete said solemnly, "don't rely on that! There's nothing to catch a woman's imagination like a little mystery."

"But there is no mystery. It is as simple as A, B, C."

The three men laughed.

"I'd like to know your idea of complexity," Win said, "if you think your story is so simple. In your boots, I'd feel that I had had a fairly exciting life — not to say complex."

"You've left out the part I'd be most interested in," Lancaster said; "about Russia."

"Oh, there is nothing interesting about that. Inslavsky exaggerates what I did for him — By the way, Mr. Mathews, I came in to ask you a question. You see, I am not familiar with your social usages. I bought a book on etiquette, but it is not very clear. Now, you have all been so kind to me — Mr. and Mrs. Lockwood and the young ladies. What ought I to do? I tried to call on the Lockwoods this afternoon at five, as the book says, but they were not at home."

"You might as well throw that book away," Win laughed, "it won't help you with our crowd; we're not a bit formal. It's a courtesy to make a dinner call wherever you've had a meal. But it isn't your fault if the Lockwoods weren't home. You've done your duty. But I'm sure they want to see more of you. Call them up on the telephone, if you care to, and ask when you can find them in. You'd be welcome."

"And the young ladies? Mrs. Lockwood took me to their apartment the other night. Is it proper for me to call on them by myself?"

"Sure," Pete said. "Do what you want to do. Don't call before seven in the morning unless they ask you to breakfast and don't stay after three A. M. unless they urge you to."

"You're joking," Lane said.

"Pete's always flippant," Win said. "It isn't his fault. It's like your talent for languages. He was born that way. Call on them any afternoon after four or in the evening. Miss Cash is often out in the evening, Miss Bender very seldom. You know she is not strong. So, if you go after dinner, it's best not to stay late, as she's easily tired. Call some afternoon. If they're not in, leave your card and then make an appointment by telephone."

"Thanks, very much," Lane said, getting up to go. "I like to get acquainted with people, but I'm rather afraid of being laughed at. Good night, all."

"I envy your aplomb, Pete," Win said, when Lane had gone. "Here we've been consumed with curiosity about him and didn't have the nerve to ask. You come out with it flat-footed — and I don't think he was offended."

"No, of course not," McGee retorted. "Why should he be? He hasn't anything to hide. One look is enough to see that he's the right sort. It's real diffidence, not secretiveness, that's kept him from talking — diffidence and his fool book on etiquette. I've often seen books like that advertised and wondered who read them. He's the first person I ever knew who took them seriously."

"I wonder," Lancaster said, "why he's so close-mouthed about his Russian experiences."

"Oh, hell! Make a mystery about that if you want to. Perhaps he threw a bomb at a prime minister. Just as likely he had an unfortunate love affair. Anyhow, I believe what he says. He doesn't think it's interesting. He's a good fellow."

CHAPTER X

THE CALL

A few minutes after five, three days later, the Stranger made his call. In the hallway of the apartment house he told the negro boy at the telephone switchboard that his name was Lane and that he was calling on Miss Cash and Miss Bender. He had carefully listened to and noted these formalities when he had come before with Lillian Lockwood. In a few minutes an answer came down. The boy told him that they were at home and took him upstairs in the elevator. Jenny, the Jamaican maid, opened the door and once more assured him that the young ladies were at home. Her dialect caught his attention. He was tempted to stop and talk with her, but decided that it might not be proper. So, giving her his hat and coat, he started down the hallway.

He could hear Helen saying, into a dictaphone: "I can give you my personal assurance that the money will be expended efficiently." He frowned at the sound. No one has yet discovered how to dictate in a pleasing tone. As he passed the open door of her little office, Helen spoke to him.

"How do you do, Mr. Lane? Glad to see you. Excuse me for a minute. I have a batch of letters I must finish. You'll find Miss Bender in the library. She'll entertain you till I come."

This was not crude conceit on Helen's part. Dominance was her birthright. She was the senior member of the firm of Cash and Bender. She took it for granted that people who called at the Flat came to see her. They generally did.

"Do not let me interrupt you," Lane said with a touch of eagerness, which was hardly polite. But Helen did not notice it.

Eunice, overhearing this conversation, got up from the couch, threw back the rug from her feet, and patted her hair. It was very beautiful hair. It was her one vanity. Several times in her illnesses the doctors had advised cutting it. But she had a superstition that her hair was like Samson's, that if it were cut all virtue would depart from her. She had always resisted.

Her gown also seemed wonderful to Lane. It was of soft, deep blue crêpe, there were cuffs and a girdle and bodice decorations of a stiff, old-gold brocade. Eunice had worn it now three afternoons running—ever since Win told them of Lane's threatened call. She would have felt amply repaid for the trouble if she had known how beautiful it seemed to him. But he had been reared in a school where it is not seemly for a man to express openly his admiration of a strange woman.

In her hand she held a large, thin, gaudily illustrated children's book. The pictures, in the color and style of a Sunday comic supplement, portrayed the incredible adventures of an impossible animal called the "Dipsomar."

"You see," she said, when she had helped him

through the awkwardness of greeting. "I'm studying the work of my newest rival."

Evidently he did not understand.

"Perhaps you don't know my trade. I'm an entertainer of children. I'm not strong enough to go on the stage for them. So I stay at home and draw pictures. It is something I can do in bed. Not a very dignified profession—but it's profitable. I manage to pay my board and lodging and doctor's bill."

This was a very unusual speech for Eunice. She seldom alluded to her illness, being morbidly sensitive on the subject. And it was as rare for her to speak of her work. The people she saw oftenest did not take it very seriously, and she was quite willing not to have it discussed.

But some impulse came to her from this Stranger, which drove her to introduce these subjects. Three days she had sat there waiting for him with this foolish book close at hand. The speech was carefully rehearsed. She was deliberately putting her worst foot forward.

"You make books for children?" he asked. "May I see one of them?"

"I'm afraid you'd find this one more interesting. My publishers tell me that a great many people do."

"I would rather see one of yours," he said, putting down the Dipsomar book, which she offered him on the table.

"I ——"

She started to say that she had not thought polite flattery was one of his accomplishments, but he had

spoken so simply that perhaps it was not a banality. So she interrupted herself to take down one of her own books from the shelves behind her couch.

"It's just out," she said, "for this Christmas trade."

It was called "The Adventures of Tit, Tat, Toe and Little Tot in Europe." On each right-hand page there was a picture of the four youngsters and their nurses surrounded by the children of Holland or Spain or some other country of Europe. It was delicate line work, heightened here and there with a touch of color. The drawings were intimate and surprisingly varied. On the left-hand pages were the rhymed stories of the children's adventures. The verses were not so brilliant as the drawing, but much above the average of such work. And they did not belong to that type of "children's poetry" which is written to amuse grown-ups.

Lane turned the pages slowly, attentively. A scene on a French beach caught his eye. There was a little *gamin* in a black apron that might have been drawn from the son of his *concierge* in the *pension* where he had stopped in Paris. Germany and the northern countries he did not know. But Naples was familiar and the picture true.

"You have been abroad a great deal," he said.

"No. I've never been out of the United States."

He looked up at her in amazement.

"But how do you draw such pictures?"

"Photographs. Books." She pulled down from the shelves a volume called "Children of All Lands."

"This helps me most."

"Your eyes must be wonderful to catch all the nuances, the distinctive details. It is a little like my ears. I am sharp on sounds—on the shades that most people do not hear. But I cannot see things the way you do. It is marvelous."

Again the compliment was so direct that Eunice did not know how to turn it. Very much deeper was the unspoken compliment. He was interested in her work, of which others thought lightly. He had not said—"How clever!" She hated people who called her work "clever."

"I'm doing another book for next year," she said eagerly. "They want it to be about the Orient. If it wouldn't bore you, I'd like to show the drawings I've already made. Of course, they're just rough sketches. Would it bore you?"

"No, indeed. I would like to see them."

"I'll get the portfolio—why, here it is."

When Eunice had put it there behind the couch, she had laughed at herself—bitterly. There was not one chance in a thousand that he would be interested. But he was.

"I have never been in China," he said, as he turned over the first sketch with a glance. "Nor in Japan."

"That's supposed to be Constantinople."

In the foreground was the Galatea Bridge with the heights of Stamboul behind. He looked at it earnestly.

"Do you want it to be quite right?"

"Of course."

"Well, you cannot see Santa Sophia from here, looking up the Golden Horn, it is too far to the left.

You would see the Sekretariat, an ugly square tower, and the Mosque of Sultan Mehmed, the Victorious. It has only two minarets. And this boat — I worked on one once — it is a Marmora boat. They anchor below the bridge. The Bosphorus boats that come up here have flat, low bows and light masts, which they take down to get under the bridge. These people walking across are very good. I can recognize them. This man is an Anatolian. And this one is a Kurd. And here is a shepherd from Thrace — near Adrianople. But they are all country people. You ought to have some city Turks — French clothes and Stambouli tarbooshes — flat-topped fezzes like Ali Zaky Bey wears. And there ought to be some beggars — the old women selling sweets. The Turkish children are fine. But there should be more of them with their fathers. In the East you see men with their children much more than you do here.”

“Anything else?”

“No, nothing! It really is wonderful.” He glanced up at her, but looked away shyly as he caught her eye. “Really, it is so much better than I expected. So much nearer right than I thought any one could do who had not been there. I know the place so well and I see so little that is wrong. Only the mosque, you must change that; but no one would notice the boats.”

“I’m glad you think it’s good. That story-teller gave me an idea for another picture. Could I have the children in Morocco — listening to a story-teller?”

“Of course. Yes! The Aïd el-Kebir at Marakesh. I have some photographs which would help you. It is

the children's feast — to commemorate Abraham's sacrifice. At the last moment, you know, God told him to kill a sheep instead of his son. All good Muslims kill a sheep and buy new clothes for the children. In the great square in Marakesh there are merry-go-rounds and shadow shows, snake charmers, jugglers, and of course story-tellers — all for the children."

Helen, coming in at this moment, took in the situation at a glance. Of course a scholar, like Mr. Lane, could not be interested in pictures for children.

In regard to Eunice's work, Helen had two distinct points of view. To strangers, she always spoke of it highly. In spite of pitiful ill health, Eunice was earning her living. So many strong, perfectly healthy women did not do as much. She had won her economic independence and deserved the respect of all feminists.

However to her intimate friends Helen regretted that Eunice was not capable of some really useful work. It must be very painful to depend for one's living on such a trivial, unimportant occupation. Frank thought, and frequently said, that Helen underestimated the value of Eunice's work. Helen indignantly denied the charge; she maintained that she gave Eunice her due regard. Like every modern woman she felt it was her duty to be self-supporting. That she was not strong, of course, made it hard. But if she were strong she would undertake harder, more useful work. She insisted that Frank's attitude was due to old-fashioned gallantry. "The fact that she's a woman does not raise nor lower the value of her contribution to society, does not alter it in the

least. I'm immensely proud of the brave fight she is making against appalling handicaps, but that is no reason to lose sight of the fact that her work is ephemeral to a degree. A mere fad. It will be utterly forgotten in a few years. Anyhow," Helen would end the argument, "Eunice doesn't agree with you. She doesn't think she's anything extraordinary. You never hear her talking about her drawings, as if she thought it was wonderful." She was decidedly surprised to find Eunice showing her work to Lane.

"I'm sorry you happened to come to-day," she said. "I'm all tied up with work. I have to make a speech to-night to a woman's club — out in the Jersey Hinterland. It's so far, I must go to dinner there with the lady president. I'll have to dash away in a minute to dress — can't even stop for tea. I hate speaking to suburban clubwomen. It's sure to be stupid."

"What are you going to speak about?" Lane asked.

The words were no sooner out of his mouth than he flushed hotly. Of course he should have said, "I am sure it will not be stupid, if you are the speaker." But, as it did not occur to Helen that her part in the performance would be uninteresting, she was not touched by his *faux pas*. She wondered why he blushed. But Eunice knew and it amused her so that she sought shelter behind her drawings to hide her smile.

"Efficiency," Helen replied to his question.

"Efficiency?" he echoed blankly. "Efficiency for what?"

"Why, efficiency; efficiency in general. That's the gospel for the woman of to-day. We're asking men to

give us the vote — and much more — to let us take a real share in the life of society, in its business, its industry, its politics — in everything. We cannot expect them to trust us with these responsibilities until we demonstrate that we can meet them efficiently. Don't you think that 'Efficiency' is a good battle cry for women?"

Lane really wanted to understand Helen and her point of view. But he did not.

"I wish I could hear your speech," he said. "The subject interests me. I hear the word so often here in America — almost as if it were a religious doctrine. You call it a gospel for women. I can understand efficiency in some given direction — efficiency in business or government — an efficient soldier or an efficient mother. But efficiency by itself? You would not like efficiency in crime — in murder or theft."

It was impossible for Helen to admit quickly and suddenly that she was wrong. Her first reflex to any opposition, no matter how plausible it might sound, was to argue against it. Her mind worked that way. It took her considerable time to revise her opinions. It was never a facile process.

"I'm not talking to murderers and thieves," she said sharply, "but to people with good intentions. That's the trouble with them. They have nothing but good intentions. They don't know how to do the things they want to get done. They're inefficient."

"If people want things hard enough do they not just naturally learn how to get them?" he asked. "Most people are easily contented — their desires are

feeble — they do not care so very much for anything. They would rather go without than take the trouble to get. At least, so it seems to me.

“I think that *what* one wants, and the ardor and determination with which one wants it, is of more importance than one’s skill or efficiency in getting. If the will is there, the skill will come. You have the proverbs: ‘Necessity is the mother of invention,’ ‘Where there’s a will, there’s a way.’ It seems to me that intentions — aspirations are more important than methods.”

“I’m sorry,” Helen said, “I must run and get dressed or I’ll miss my train. But I want to argue this out with you some time.”

In all his encounters with Helen, Lane felt that they were at cross-purposes. He did his best to meet her on some common ground, but each time he felt a greater distance between them. It distressed him. He felt so ill at ease that he started to leave.

“Oh, please, sit down again,” Eunice said. “Jenny has made some tea. If you ring that bell, she’ll bring it.”

He did as directed and then came close to her.

“Jenny is the black woman? Speak to her, please, make her talk. I like to hear her.”

Jenny came in with the tea tray and Eunice, asking some household question, held her talking a few minutes.

“It is very interesting,” he said when she had gone back to the kitchen. “Much the way black folks speak Arabic. The ‘l’s’ and the ‘r’s’ are just the same. Where was she born?”

“Jamaica. In the West Indies.”

“There must be many negroes there. It is more black folks’ talk than your American negroes — they try so hard to speak like white people.”

While she was pouring the tea, Eunice made him talk about his specialty. What he had said about her eyes and his ears was very true. She saw that tones and inflections and accents were to him what color and line and light were to her. She remembered, without any effort, how Holbein had drawn Erasmus’ nose. In the same way his mind treasured the peculiarities of people’s speech.

He was explaining to her the tongue-clicking sounds of some African tribes, when Helen returned from her room, booted and spurred for her crusade on behalf of efficiency. For the first time, Lane realized that she was what most people would call good to look at — a magnificent woman. But somehow he liked her less for this discovery. Her gown was a resplendent affair of black and jet. The way it emphasized the whiteness of her bare shoulders startled him. In the months he had spent in Christian lands, he had gotten over his Oriental embarrassment at the sight of unveiled women, just as explorers in equatorial Africa fail, after a few days, to take note of nudity. At the theater he had become accustomed to décolleté — at long range. Helen’s dress was not cut low, but the glaring contrast of black silk and white flesh troubled him. And she was going to stand up in public like this!

“I saw you on the street yesterday,” she said, blissfully unconscious of his criticism, “but you

were engrossed in a book and did not notice me."

"I am sorry," he said. He had jumped up when she entered the room. "Where was it?"

"If you don't mind my scolding you a little"—this with a smile she thought motherly—"I'll tell you. You were having your shoes shined in a chair outside of one of the most disreputable saloons on Broadway."

"Yes!"—his eyes opened in surprise—"I remember. Was it wrong?"

"Well, gentlemen don't generally have their shoes shined in such a place."

"I had just stepped into a mud puddle. I was going to a private house—where there are very fine rugs. I had to have my shoes cleaned. I might have gone inside—there is a chair inside—but I do not drink."

"Oh, no! That would have been worse. You don't want to be seen coming out of a place like that—it is most disreputable. You ought to have gone into a hotel."

"But it is just the same in a hotel. The shoe-cleaning chairs are in the bar. Is it more respectable if you have to pay a fancy price for your drinks?"

"Mr. Lane," Eunice intervened, "if you're not busy to-night, can't you have dinner with me here? It isn't very gay for me, when Helen has to go out. I think Mr. Mathews is coming in later and perhaps Mr. McGee. Take Helen over to Hoboken and put her on the train—and come back here at seven."

"Why, yes," that would be fine," Helen agreed

warmly. "We can talk on the way across and then you'll come back and keep Eunice company."

"I will be glad to take you to the train, Miss Cash. And I would like to come back," he said, half frightened, half wistful. "But I am not quite sure. I will have to go to my room first. I may find an engagement which I cannot break. I will telephone."

"Never mind telephoning," Eunice said. "Come, if you can. There'll be a plate for you. I won't wait. Don't bother to dress."

When they had gone, Eunice told Jenny to lay dinner for two.

"It's just possible," she said, "that Mr. Lane may come back."

Then she stretched out on her couch, and pulled the shawl up over her feet. She was overcome by a depressing lassitude. Why pretend to expect him? He would not come back. Why should he? Helen, the talented, the able, the forthfaring, had carried him off. Helen, the strong the beautiful—the healthy. She repeated to herself all her friend's wonderful attributes and was surprised to find herself doing so, almost as if it were necessary to seek excuses for her. It was childish, of course, to resent Helen's taking him off. She herself had suggested it.

She wondered what they were talking about. How would it seem to stride along beside a man, feeling every bit as strong as he? She wondered what they thought of each other. He would fall in love with Helen, of course. Men did. He would not right away. He was sensitive and Helen's brusqueness dis-

turbed him. It was easy to see that. But he would soon get used to it and discover, back of her abrupt manner, the really fine woman whom her friends knew. And then — well — perhaps a few crumbs would fall to her share. He would be good to her, just as Pete and Win were.

Suddenly the unwelcome idea flashed into her mind that perhaps they were talking about her. Helen would be excusing her, asking him to make allowance for her weakness, to be kind to her — appealing to his pity. It made her hot and angry all over. She had an impulse to tell Jenny to remove the extra plate and to tell Mr. Lane, if he came, that she had gone to the opera.

Then, quite suddenly, with abrupt and startling clearness, she realized that she did not care why he came — just so he did come.

Yes, she wanted to see him, to hear his voice again more than she had ever wanted anything. If an appeal to pity were necessary to persuade him to come, she hoped Helen would make it.

She lay quite still for a long time, thinking about this, trying to realize what it meant to her. It dazzled and dizzied her. She could not decide whether she ought to be glad or sad that things were so. At least she was sure of one thing. It was sad there could be any doubt. A woman ought to be made glad by love.

In these years of close friendship with Helen, Eunice had become familiar with most of our modern thought on social problems. She had read all the textbooks of the advance guard. The mystery of the

death sentence against her own family had given her an especial interest in eugenics. She knew as much about the matter of heredity as any one. And what we know of this subject, while very little, is impressive. The judgment of the world in which she lived, a judgment in which she fully concurred, was explicit. She ought not to be a mother. So thoroughly had she accepted this verdict that the bare idea of her being in love seemed to her indecent. Such things were not for her.

But, although she knew that she must fold this love away in her heart, never let any one know of it — least of all Lane — she decided at last that she was glad.

Yes, however piteous and futile it might be, she was glad. Glad to know there was enough vitality in her pallid blood to thrill to this great impulse of health.

Yes! She was glad. All the secret and hitherto silent voices within her sang an anthem of joy. And now and then they stopped their song to pray — to pray that he should come.

CHAPTER XI

THE DINNER

There was uneasy confusion in the Stranger's mind as he stopped before the house where he knew Eunice was waiting for him. He pulled out his watch. It was ten minutes to seven. This gave him excuse for further hesitation. He would have time to walk to the Square and back.

He had been struggling with indecision for an hour, ever since he had put Helen on the train, and so had been able to spare attention for the evening's problem. He was surprised at himself. He could not explain his hesitancy. New, strange countries, the way their inhabitants lived and thought about life, fascinated him. Getting acquainted with people was his favorite occupation. Dining alone with a woman would be an entirely new experience. It promised many new insights. And yet, for some inexplicable reason, the prospect frightened him and made him hesitate.

As far back as he could remember he had been a nomad, a wanderer, an explorer. Always his interest had been human, not geographic. It was more natural for him to date his memories by "The year I met so and so," than by "The year I was in such and such a place."

He had a queer pride in his ability to pick up the

language of strange peoples, to learn their customs and tricks of manner. It pleased him to know that he could borrow Ali Zaky Bey's *stambouli tarboosh* and pass from Bremen to Bagdad as a Young Turk. He could let his beard grow and dye it with *henna* and travel from Bokhara to Bombay, reciting the poetry of Sa'adi and Hafiz and no one would doubt that he was not Persian born. He could put on a black gaberdine and journey from synagogue to synagogue across North Africa as a Jewish rabbi. With a little stain rubbed into his skin and a Coptic costume, he might have held a clerkship in the Anglo-Egyptian Civil Service.

Now he was spending much of his time in Chinese laundries and chop suey restaurants, hours on end in Pell and Doyer Streets, watching the little characteristic gestures, studying the forms of greetings and partings, listening to the sounds of the Celestial Empire. Already he could distinguish one dialect from another. He had learned to read a few hundred word signs. There was an alluring project taking shape in his mind of going home by way of China. Strange people, strange tongues, above all unfamiliar attitudes toward life, drew him like a magnet.

He did not see any utility in this; it simply charmed him. The literatures of the countries he visited interested him in so far as they helped him to understand the new community. He read a great deal, but he would not have called himself a student of the literature. He loved passionately the poetry of his own people, but his attitude toward it was not at all "scientific." It gave him pleasure.

To be sure, some instinct of truth in him was offended when he read false statements about it, wrong conclusions and uncomprehending attempts at interpretation. Such things vexed him, and several years before he had gone to England to correct some such mistakes. But this had been only half his motive for that voyage. He had wanted to explore Christendom. In the same mixed mood he had come to America. The German's grammar had been entirely stupid and it would be amusing to write a book about the Shilah, which he had learned at the breast of his foster mother. But more attractive had been the chance to see the strange people of his parents' land. The same curiosity which was now drawing him towards China had brought him to America. It had held him here longer than he had expected.

America had baffled him. He had not found it easy to get acquainted. For several months he had lived in Cambridge. Professor Petroff, also an exile, was the only person with whom he had become familiar. He had felt rebuffed by the Americans of better birth and breeding. Nowhere else in his wanderings had he found himself so completely a stranger. Most of his intercourse had been with other immigrants, with Syrians, Greeks, and Armenians. Beyond a few amateur Orientalists and some college professors he had made no acquaintances among the Americans of New York.

So, when a month before Win Mathews had shown a disposition to notice his existence, he had been pleased. He had gone out more than halfway to meet this adventure of a new acquaintance. When

Win had proposed to introduce him to others, to American women, he had been more than pleased — interested — thrilled, as an entomologist is with a new species of bugs to study.

He had not expected that Win and his friends would mean more to him than the casual acquaintances he had picked up in market places and caravansaries in other ends of the earth. The idea of permanent relationships had not developed in his wandering life. His soul had learned from his body to be here to-day and far away to-morrow.

But this pale woman, Eunice, had opened up a new vista to him. Somehow there was a suggestion about her, a vague promise, of closer and more intimate communion than he had ever known. He was conscious of a mystic kinship, as though she were one of his own people. For the first time in his life he felt lonely.

He had never had an intimate friend. He had been the friend of all the world. But she was different. In her deep, quiet eyes he saw something more than interesting, something which stirred more than curiosity — a new value to life. It was something, not to study and discard, but to treasure and hold tight.

Yet, in spite of the poignant pleasure which an evening with her offered, he hesitated. For one needs practice in friendship. The dwellers in tents always hesitate on the threshold of a house. His soul, suddenly yearning for the comforts of permanency but used only to the freedom of the casual, trembled and held back.

In his walk back from the ferry, after having parted from Helen, he had stopped a dozen times before drug stores, almost resolved to telephone that he could not come to dinner. He might have done so, if it had not been for that half hour with Helen.

She had not discussed her gospel of efficiency with him. She wanted to think over his criticism a while before she returned to the attack. She had utilized the opportunity in the process she had described to Eunice as "taking him in hand." And her motto was: "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it efficiently."

She had done most of the talking and the subject of her discourse had been, "The Disadvantage of Queerness."

"A person who wants to get on in the world, to accomplish anything," she said, "simply can't afford to be a freak. Now, my life is, fundamentally, unconventional. I'm not at all satisfied with things as they are, nor the ordinary ways of life. I'm doing my best to change them. The conventional way — the way people have always done it — is sure to be wrong.

"In the big issues, the matters that count, I'm entirely unconventional. I make up my mind that something ought to be done and I go right ahead and do it — without any worry about what people will think or say. But in the little issues that don't matter — dress, for instance, I'm scrupulously conventional. I'm going to speak to suburban clubwomen to-night — the most sheeplike, conventional people on earth. Well, they're expecting a short-haired, uncorseted woman in ugly horn glasses. They'll be surprised to

see me quite as well dressed as they are. They'll listen to what I say and believe it. If I wore a sailor blouse, I'd be more comfortable; but I could use exactly the same words — with no effect.

“Of course it doesn't matter *ethically* what kind of clothes I wear, nor where you have your shoes shined. But in other ways it matters a great deal. It doesn't matter *ethically* what kind of collars a man wears. But most men observe the prevailing fashion. It's queer not to. And here in New York that doesn't pay. Once you get the reputation of being a freak you're 'queered.' That's slang, but it's true slang. It means that you've lost your audience — your influence. It means that you are unconsidered. Nothing you do or say will be taken seriously. It's about the worst thing that can happen to a person.”

This process of being “taken in hand” had been like the sandpapering of a blister to Lane, like a plague of biting flies. He could not have explained why it hurt him so much. He did not think it impertinent. He was glad to have his attention called to such matters as where it is proper to have one's shoes shined. And the collars — he blushed with shame about that. He ought to have noticed. He had a peculiar pride in his ability to make up for a part. He had been inexcusably careless in this.

He had bought those offending collars from a Spanish Jew in Tangier, when he had come down from the interior with Petroff and had outfitted for his explorations in America. There were so many varieties of collars! And besides, all collars were so uncomfortable and absurd! He had not thought there

was a prevailing style. He would put his mind to it.

He knew that he thought these details of custom and dress more important than Helen did. It was not the content but the tone of her discourse that hurt. What she was criticizing was his attitude of mind. The flaws in his get-up were only symptoms. He hardly stopped to analyze why her judgment should touch and hurt him personally. But the constraint he had always felt in her presence had become painfully acute. He wanted to like her, but he could not. It made him feel defeated and sore.

In a way her verdict seemed to him the verdict of America. He was, in her own phrase, "unconsidered." In the rush and turmoil and haste of his father's land, he felt himself peculiarly unimportant. At most a few dozen people valued his scholarship — the one thing about himself which he valued least. In a manner quite new to his experience, he felt himself of no account. In the busy marts of the East, in the bazaars of Stamboul, Bagdad, Calcutta, he had not felt any such oppressive isolation from human-kind, such loneliness.

And so, in spite of his strange hesitancy, he returned to Eunice's door. She would comprehend him and approve. If his feelings had needed salve less, he would have been afraid to seek it. But Helen had bruised him so that he sought comfort, regardless of consequences.

More definitely than ever before he had the feeling of coming home, as Jenny let him into the Flat. And, also for the first time, as he entered the library, he

looked Eunice in the face. It was impossible not to. Her face was radiant.

There was no more any hesitancy for him. He knew why he had come, what was happening to him. But he felt no haste. It would have seemed to him crass and vulgar to hurry in so solemn a matter. The great gods are not pressed for time.

He took up the conversation, as they sat down to dinner, where Helen had interrupted it; the debatable question of the relations between the Semitic languages and the Hamitic speech of the blacks. Eunice had never heard of the subject before, but he made it interesting. With the salad, they switched back to the Children's Fête at Marakesh — the Aïd el-Kebir — and that brought them, with the dessert, to the art of story-telling, the tale Sidi Bobker had told and the Oriental attitude toward Love and God.

"Max Müller," he said, "a German scholar, who was familiar with your literature and with much of ours, made a nasty epigram to the effect that the two basic preoccupations of mankind are obscenity and superstition. He meant Sex and Religion. We would say Love and God — and then we would add, they are one and the same.

"I think the finest thing about Mohammedanism is that its followers — some of them — have developed the highest mysticism without asceticism. All your deeply religious people have turned away from life. The World, the Flesh, and the Devil! That is a Christian Trinity which is harder for us to understand than the other. In your religious literature it is a thing of shame — this wonderful world, which

God has given us. Why should we hate His gift? I think God must have loved it; He made it so carefully, so beautifully. And why should we be ashamed of our flesh? He was not ashamed to create it — after His own image.

“The Christian Church teaches that we should love our fellow men. Of course. All religions have taught that. But why should we not also love the dumb animals, the perfume and color of flowers, precious stones and nature? Mohammed has some wonderful verses in the Koran about his favorite horse, about the camel which carried him in safety from his enemies. We are taught, as little children, that our Prophet loved ‘the cool sun of dawn’ and ‘the blaze of noon’ and ‘the lightning when it flashed’ and rivers and wells of cool water, the shade of the date palms and the beauty and wonder of all live things and the face of the Beloved — all the rich bounty of our Most Merciful God. The saints of our history have loved such things passionately. I do not think that they could have loved God so well if they had hated His gifts — as the fathers of your church have taught. Should we blame the grapes, because men have discovered how to make wine and drunkenness? The Christians seem always to be arguing that way.

“Once I read a Latin book — St. Jerome. He talks so much of original sin — all little children ‘conceived in sin.’ It seems a very horrible idea to me. I have tried hard to understand, but I have not succeeded. I can understand fearing a God who had put us in a world, given us a Flesh, which we must

hate and shun — but I could not love such a God.”

Conversation hung for a moment, after Jenny had brought them coffee in the library. Lane stirred uneasily in his chair, took out a cigarette, and looked once more directly into Eunice’s face. His forehead was wrinkled.

“What’s the matter?” she said.

“I would like to ask you a question, but perhaps it is too personal.”

“Ask it,” she smiled reassuringly. “I won’t answer if I don’t want to.”

“Oh, it is not about you. It is about me. Do you think I am queer?”

“What on earth do you mean?”

“Well, Miss Cash says I am queer. I do not mean the collar, nor having my shoes shined on the sidewalk. She means more than that. Do you, too, think I am queer?”

“Yes,” she said, after long consideration. “I suppose you are — to most people. But you seem just the opposite to me — extraordinarily, queerly, the opposite. You see I’ve always been sick” — deep within her, Eunice felt that it would be despicable to let him have the slightest misconception on this point, and, having done this duty, it seemed safe to be quite frank — “and of course my life has been different from most people’s. My world is mostly hearsay. Being so much of the time in bed I’ve had little chance for experiences of my own. And I often feel like a stranger among real people — they seem strange to me. I know the words they use, but very often I’m not sure that I know what they really intend by what they

say. It changes even the meaning of words to be sick, as I have been. They are all wonderfully good to me. Helen is the kindest person in the world — so are the men, Win and Frank and Pete. But very often, when they talk, I feel out of it — a stranger. But somehow it's been different with you. I haven't felt that way. It's as though we were near of kin — no, that's not it" — she hesitated a minute to find the exact word — "it's as if long ago, always, we had been good friends. And just because you don't seem queer to me, I suppose you are to other people. Sometimes they tell me I'm queer, too."

"Then, I am glad to be queer."

She could think of nothing to say. No more could he. He smoked in silence. There were so many things he would have liked to say, but he could not find the words. He saw clearly what the Fates were doing to them. He had no desire to resist. But the realization of love is a strange and awesome experience to any one, more especially to one like him whose life had always been so unattached. He had a yearning to reach out and touch her. But this seemed too crude, too rude and daring, in the face of the Great Mystery. Then abruptly he felt embarrassed. Anything would be better than this dazzling silence.

"Do the men also think I am queer?"

He asked it, not because he cared, but just to say something.

"Not in any way that means they don't like you. Win and Lancaster were in the other day and told us what you had told them — I hope you don't mind our talking about you."

"Oh, no. I am glad they told you. I do not like to seem mysterious. And Mr. McGee said you all thought I was. It seems so simple to me, so natural. I do not know why I like languages nor why I wander about. I always have. I have been here in New York longer than usual — over a year in one place! I think I will go to China next. They are interesting people. It is a very difficult language, different from any I ever studied before. I am just beginning to understand it — a little."

Eunice's heart sank at the thought of his going to China. But she was in a mood of self-torture. She had no right to ask him to stay. For a while she let him talk about his chop-suey acquaintances and of the things he had learned about Chinatown.

"When are you going?"

"Oh, I do not know."

Once more the blanket of silence fell on them — suffocatingly. A cheering thought came to her. It was pleasant to think that the men she knew liked this dear friend she had just found.

"You needn't worry about the men," she said. "They like you — very much."

"I am glad. I like them. I have seen most of Mr. Mathews. And Mr. Lockwood — I cannot tell what it is, but he is unhappy; I think I would like him best if I knew him well. And Professor Lancaster. He interests me very much. He is so earnest — I want to know him better. Do you think he would like it — if I went to see him?"

"Yes, indeed. He's keen to ask you about Morocco.

He's writing a book on Ethnology. But he thinks you don't like him."

"Why? Have I offended him?"

"Well, not exactly. But he's disappointed. He says you snub him."

"Snub him? How?"

"Well, you see he's a Socialist and very much interested in Russia. He said — oh, he was laughing about it, not angry — he said he'd asked you about Russia twice and both times you'd snubbed him. You rather did that night he was here."

"Why, I told him to ask Inslavsky."

"And Inslavsky told him to ask you."

Lane's perplexity gave place to amusement and he laughed quietly.

"How stupid! What a mountain in a molehill — I mean what a tempest in a teapot. I will go and tell him. But Inslavsky knows so much more about Russia than I. It was only a few months I was there. I was only a youngster — and it was all very foolish. I am a little ashamed of it.

"But you will understand" — he looked up at her, surprised at his own certainty that she would understand. "You see — perhaps they told you — my father died when I was a boy. We were coming back from Mecca. There was a plague in the town — it was that he died of. Father had always intended to send me to America to study medicine. And when he knew he was going to die, he called in some missionary doctors, who were also fighting the plague, and asked them to take care of me. They said they would teach me to be a Christian. Father said he did not

think that mattered much, so long as I grew up brave and not afraid to die. *He* was not afraid. Those were his last words, and of course I remembered them. I was only a little boy, and I thought my father was the most wonderful man in the world — and he wanted me to be a doctor and a brave man. After I ran away from Beirut and went to Robert College, I saw I could not make a good doctor, so it seemed all the more important for me to be the other half of what he had wanted. He had said that being brave mattered most.

“I thought about it a great deal. How was I to know — there in college — whether I was brave or not? There was no war. Perhaps I was afraid to die. The missionaries talked to us very gloomily about death and hell. Perhaps they had frightened me, anyhow I was not sure. I felt badly about not being a doctor as my father had wanted, so it seemed to me most important to make sure I was brave — or, if I were not, to learn how to be.

“There were some Armenian boys in the college from the Caucasus and they used to tell stories about their brave men — ‘The Brothers of the Hills’ — who are always fighting the Russians. One of the boys was named David. His father was chief of a band. I knew that when he left college he would go home to fight. He was older than I — almost a man.

“So I told David my perplexity — how I wanted to be sure I was brave. Perhaps an American boy would not understand how I felt, but David did, anybody from the East would. He asked me to go with him. It would be a good test, he said, because ‘The

Brothers of the Hills' have to be brave. So the day after he left college, I slipped away and joined him."

"How old were you?"

"I do not know exactly how old I am, but I think I was about sixteen. And after I was in the mountains with this band for five or six months, I went to Russia ——"

"But tell me. How was it? You found you were brave?"

"Well — not very — not exactly," he said judicially. "At least not at first. I was very much afraid when I had to shoot at the soldiers — the first time. But of course I would not tell any one that I was frightened; I pretended to be brave and -- well — very quickly one gets used to anything, even to killing people. But at first it was awful."

It was a very long time since he had thought of that great test of his boyhood, so many things had happened since to overlay the memory. But suddenly — there in this very civilized apartment — it all came back to him vividly. He wanted to talk about it, to live it over again for this understanding one.

"Would you like me to tell you about it?" he asked, looking up at her.

"Yes, please," she said, with an eager smile.

He got up from his chair nervously and walked about a moment, slowly pulling the old memory out of the recesses of his mind.

"It was all so long ago," he said at last, "that it seems like a 'once upon a time' story."

She had curled up among the cushions at one end

of the couch and he sat down cross-legged at the other.

"It all came so suddenly," he began. "There was no time to prepare myself. No easy first steps. It came all at once — bang!

"All across the Black Sea there was a storm. And I was sick. I am not a good sailor. And when we got to Batum, there was a man waiting with a horse for my friend David. I was not expected. I was so sick I hardly cared whether I were brave or not. But somehow David arranged for another horse and we set off. The man said we must hurry. After two days' very hard riding we reached the camp. David's father — the chief — was not glad to see me. He said I was too young. He was very angry with David for having brought me. They were just setting off to rescue some friends who had been captured. They did not trust me enough to leave me alone in their camp. So they gave me a rifle and took me with them.

"There were ten men and we two boys. Riding along, I listened to their talk and found out what it was all about. Some of their comrades had been arrested — about twenty of them. And a company of Cossacks was going to take them across the mountains by the military road from Tiflis to Vladikavkas. From there — unless we rescued them — they would be sent to the mines in Siberia.

"All night long and most of the next day we rode through the mountains up and up toward the top — wild trails which only the hill folk know — and so very beautiful. A little before sundown, we struck the great military road a few miles below Goudaour.

That was the station at the summit of the pass where the Cossacks expected to spend the night.

“By the side of the road there was a fallen down, deserted house. And David’s father — the chief — made a hot fire of charcoal behind a wall and over it he arranged a bag full of cartridges. By pulling a long string, which he laid through the snow, back to the ambush on the hillside, he could spill them into the fire. And then, having tied our horses far back in the woods and, being very careful not to make tracks in the snow, we each made a hiding place behind a rock. We were just near enough to call to each other. It was very still — and cold — and, oh, so beautiful!

“We were high up toward the pass — above us were the peaks of Kasbek and Elbrus — the very highest mountains in Europe. Only a mile or so away, but a couple of thousand feet below us, was a village they called Mlety, and beyond, one slope fell from another, down, down into the valley. Here and there I could see a river, sometimes still and black, sometimes tumbling down the rocks as white as the snow on Kasbek.”

He lit a new cigarette.

“You have never seen the mountains. I love them very much. I had not seen them since I had left the High Atlas with my father to make the Hadj. They are so peaceful — the great hills — so eternally peaceful. And I had come there — into that quiet place — to find out if I were brave.”

As Eunice saw the little spot of color in his cheeks deepen at the mere memory, she, too, felt the contrast

which had thrilled him at the time — God's calm on the mountaintop and the grim business before him.

"From Mlety," he said, shaking himself out of the poignant memory to take up his story, "the road zig-zagged up the face of the mountain past us. Here and there I could see stretches of it. I had almost gone to sleep in the cold — and the beauty of it all! — and suddenly I was wide awake. Way down toward the village I saw the Cossacks. The next time they came in sight I could count them. There were a hundred, with the prisoners in their midst. And they came so slowly!

"Suddenly — so suddenly it frightened me — David called to me in English: 'Are you afraid?' 'No,' I lied. His father cursed us in Armenian and told us to be still.

"The two videttes, who rode in advance, turned the last corner. The feet of their horses made a sharp, ringing sound on the hard-beaten snow. We were very quiet. They glanced contemptuously at the half-ruined house. The charcoal fire made no smoke to warn them. They rode on and the main body of Cossacks came in sight.

"I remember that I had on very heavy gloves. But the rifle seemed to burn my hands. I was going to kill a man.

"The Cossacks were singing. They were very tired with their long ride and they were trying to cheer their tired horses. They thought it was only a little ways more to a warm fire and food and a night's rest.

"When the captain and his lieutenant were well past the house, David's father pulled the string. The

noise of the falling cartridges startled the officers. They jerked up their horses and glanced about suspiciously. The Cossacks all stopped. When the first cartridge popped in the fire — that was the signal — we, all twelve, fired. Three men had been told off to kill the captain. Two for the lieutenant, two for each of the sergeants. David and I and one of the Hill Brothers, who was not a very good shot, were to pick off the corporals.

“While our volley was still echoing through the hills, the mass of the cartridges, fallen into the charcoal, began to explode. The officers were all killed and the soldiers thought there were very many of us, so they bolted. David’s father jumped up and shouted, ‘The horses! Shoot the horses!’ There is an Armenian proverb that says: ‘It is easy to kill a Cossack who is dismounted.’ It is true.”

His cigarette had gone out in the excitement of his memory. He lit it again, and went on, without looking at Eunice:

“I was horribly afraid. Not so much at first as afterward. I went to look at my corporal. I had seen him jump in his saddle when I shot — then his horse had plunged — and he had fallen off. He was young, too — not much older than I. A broad, square, Russian face, but the hair on his face was scant — he must have had some Mongol blood.

“We did not have time to bury them.”

He smoked furiously for a few minutes, looking all the time fixedly at a point on the carpet. Gradually the color died out of his cheeks and he visibly relaxed.

“You see how foolish it was. Of course, now, I

know that was not what my father meant by being brave — to go looking for danger. He meant to be brave even in the little things of everyday — which is so much harder.

“It was foolish. But I will tell Lancaster, if he wants to know, and about how I met Inslavsky.”

“I don’t think you need to tell him *why* you went,” Eunice said in a choked voice. “He might not understand. Anyhow he would be more interested in the things you could tell him which — which aren’t so personal.”

He looked at her quickly, gratefully. It was very wonderful, the way she understood so surely what they both felt others would not understand. He was surprised and troubled to see tears in her great eyes.

“Why! What is the matter?”

“Oh, I wish I’d known you when you were a little boy like that — all alone — trying to do what your father wanted you to — and not knowing how. Didn’t you have any friends?”

The day before he would have answered that he had had legions of friends — always. But this evening he was acquiring a new standard of friendship.

“No, not exactly. I do not think I ever had a friend — a real friend. No, I never did.”

“I’ve been lonely, too.”

Both of them knew that now at last their loneliness was over.

But fortunately, for neither of them felt capable of talking about it, the doorbell rang and Jenny brought in Pete and Win.

CHAPTER XII

HELEN'S EVENING

Helen's trip to the suburbs that evening was not successful and she was not accustomed to failure.

None too gently she had taken Lane "in hand." He had suffered acutely under the process, but it had not occurred to him to strike back. He would have been mightily surprised, if he had been told, that all unwittingly he had done so. But the questioning he had started about the subject of her address, her most cherished watchword, "Efficiency," had upset her disastrously.

It was instinctive with Helen to repel criticism at the moment it was given. Her opinions were not swayed easily. The revision of accepted standards was a slow process with her. But her mental machinery, far from being fossilized, was unusually alert. It was equally a part of her nature to give careful consideration to criticism. After she had weighed it pro and con — if she found it just — she changed her mind. Slow to abandon the things she had tried and found good, she was still alert and eager for new and helpful ideas.

When Lane left her at the train, she had made little progress in the consideration of his criticism. But from their short conversation she had received a new inspiration of him. He was mature. At first he had

seemed rather juvenile. His bashfulness, his interest in the make-believe fête, his naïve confession of faith in Allah, his love of poetry and music, all these things had seemed to her a little childish.

She thought of Frank Lockwood in much the same way. His love of color and line, his delight in old furniture, his enthusiasms for sunsets, such preoccupations seemed to her hardly grown up. One rainy night Frank had walked home with her across the Square. He had interrupted a serious conversation, had halted her for a full minute, her feet in a puddle of water, trying to make her realize the beauty of Fifth Avenue — the asphalt shining in the wet, the street lights glowing through the mist, and the point of vivid color from the rear light of an automobile. Of course it was beautiful, but why get one's feet wet about it?

Eunice could be forgiven for such interests because of her ill health. But Helen really believed that if Eunice were stronger she would be interested in more serious things — more like herself. In the midst of so sorry a world, with so many things wrong which might be put right, art seemed to her little more than a child's toy.

That evening Lane had given her the impression of a person quite as old and wise and experienced with life as herself, who instead of admiring her was rather amazed, who instead of looking up to her as a remarkable person looked at her level-eyed — as at a strange and not altogether estimable specimen. Back of his studied courtesy, she saw he did not think highly of her. She was not stupid in such things. Despite

what sometimes seemed like callousness to the feelings of others, she was sensitive to their opinion of her. In a way Lane's attitude angered her, but to a greater degree it disturbed her. She wondered *why* he disliked her? Was it an error in his taste or some fault in herself? It would have been simple to dismiss him as a fool, simpler and more comfortable. But she was too courageous a person to find relief in such a subterfuge.

Without doubt Helen thought well of herself, but she was not really so conceited as she often seemed. Her friends were most to blame. They were always chanting her praises, reminding her of her manifold successes. There was a current joke among the friends about the statue which Pete talked of arranging for her. It was to be "solid brick" to typify her character. But hidden within her was a timid spot; she sometimes wondered if these successes of her were really "worth while"—at times it all seemed to her a dream, these praises an empty noise.

Lane had — with no such intention, to be sure, but by no means gently — put his finger on this timid spot. Quite humbly, as the train carried her with its rumble and roar to her destination, she asked herself whether she or Lane was to blame for his dislike of her. She did not arrive at an answer. The one firm conclusion she reached from the short interview was that he was an adult. He was grown up and intelligent, there was a certain force of character, some power she could not define. He was a person whose opinions demanded respectful consideration.

At dinner, all thought of him was crowded out of

her mind by the immediate demands of her profession. Her method of raising money for charities required close study of the people she dealt with. For "Individual Appeal" it was necessary to know her victims, their incomes and prejudices, their interests and sympathies. So, between mouthfuls, she asked her hostess searching questions about the people of wealth in the community and especially about the women she was to meet that evening. Her interest in the rich was so marked that her hostess set her down for a snob.

After dinner, the hostess carried her off in a luxurious limousine to the hall where she was to speak. It was rapidly filling with expensively gowned women, the *élite* of the suburb. There was scarcely one of them who was not overweighted with jewels.

At the door, her hostess, the president of the club, introduced Helen to the lady secretary, and the three of them, accompanied by polite hand-clapping, made their way to the platform. The secretary read the minutes of the last session, and some announcements for the future. And the president arose to introduce Helen.

"I have been at great trouble to persuade the Women's Political Union to send Miss Cash to address us. I have been trying to arrange it for more than a year — ever since my sister who lives in Tarrytown told me what a memorable and stimulating talk Miss Cash gave to the ladies of the Westchester County Club. I wrote at once to the Union, but they replied that it was quite hopeless. Of all their speakers,

Miss Cash was the most in demand. She was booked for months in advance. But I did not allow myself to be discouraged. I kept at it and at last my efforts are crowned with success. Miss Cash is here to-night to address us on 'Efficiency.' I can make no boast of so estimable a virtue, but at least I can make a modest claim to 'persistency.' The reward of my persistency"—she drove home her play on words—"will now speak to you on 'Efficiency.' "

During this interval—the secretary and the president had consumed fifteen minutes—Helen, as she looked out over the audience, had thought again of Lane. He had said he would like to hear her speak. She was very glad he was not there. She could almost visualize him before her, looking on curiously at the proceedings, courteously trying to hide his amused skepticism.

What did this audience lack to make it a vital force for human betterment? After all, were these women short on efficiency? They were clever enough at the things they really wanted to do. Every one of them was a success in her own eyes. They had proven themselves efficient in the scramble for husbands. They had captured prizes. They had wanted to live smartly in a smart community. They had succeeded. They were eminently successful in getting the kind of raiment they wanted. They were obviously efficient in persuading their men to sign generous checks.

There was one striking, immensely expensive, Paris gown which caught Helen's eye especially and seemed ludicrously symbolic. There could be no question

but that it had taken great patience, great perseverance, great skill — the infinite capacity for taking pains — to arrange that gown. If its wearer should suddenly become as deeply interested in securing a playground for the children of the silk factories — one of the projects in which the club was pretending an interest — there would be no need for Helen to preach efficiency to her. Her gorgeous dress proved that she knew how to get what she wanted.

The difference between the audience and Helen was not, she suddenly realized, one of efficiency. Their technique in the occupations to which they set their minds was every bit as high as hers. It was a difference in aspirations. Lane had been right to put the emphasis there.

In the sheen of their silks, the glitter of their jewels, she saw the limits of their aspirations. Human betterment? The Fate of the Republic? The Misery of the Masses? The Children of the Poor — the millions of little starvelings who never grow up? Such things were only side issues! The wearer of that Paris gown was interested in herself and, possibly, in her own children — if she had any.

Lane had spoiled Helen's speech. She knew that all the while the president was introducing her. She was tempted to give up her carefully prepared, often successfully repeated, address and throw some hot shots of scorn at these women for the pettiness of their aims. But it was part of her doctrine of efficiency to distrust the extemporaneous. She believed in having things thought out in advance. She could not trust herself to improvise.

As she rose to bow to the president and the ladies, she knew that her speech was spoiled. And, of course, feeling so about it, it was. Not once, in spite of her utmost efforts, did she get hold of her audience. In her desperation, she bit her words in two and the few listeners, who made an effort to understand her, missed most of it. She was so unused to this feeling of futility that a dozen times she nearly stopped. But she was a determined young lady and she bumped her way through to the bitter end. She sat down at last, her cheeks on fire. She was infuriated by the applause, she knew they would have hissed.

Luckily, she had to hurry to catch a train. She managed to hold her head high for the few minutes while people, who had nearly fallen asleep, told her how they had been stirred by her eloquence.

"I must apologize," she said to her hostess, as they stepped into the motor. "I failed utterly to-night. I don't know what was the matter."

"Perhaps you are not well," the president said stiffly.

She had boasted so much of her success in arranging this address. She had hoped that it would eclipse the memory of all meetings arranged by former presidents. It was to have been the crowning glory of her administration. It had fallen flat.

"No, I'm perfectly well," Helen said loyally. "I can't claim that excuse. I must be developing nerves in my old age — I didn't know I had any. I haven't any excuse to offer, but I'm very sorry. I don't know what was the matter."

The rest of the ride to the station was silent. But she did know.

Alone at last in the crowded car which was hurrying back to New York, Helen sat rigidly, trying to ignore the tears of rage which she could not control. Lane was to blame, and for a minute or two she cursed him.

In dealing with her assistants and colleagues, Helen had learned to excuse occasional failures, to be content with a high average of success — in others. It was harder to apply this generous rule to herself. She could not recall ever having failed so miserably before. There was some comfort in the thought that it had not been an important affair. No one for whose opinion she specially cared had witnessed her downfall. But this was small comfort. She resolved to write to the Union that she had gone stale on speaking and that they would have to cancel all her engagements for a while. She could not speak in public again till she had had time to think this matter out and analyze her failure.

The tension of her muscles relaxed after she had reached this decision. After all, it was not so very tragic. She reproached herself for having been in a pet at Lane. Intelligent criticism is the highest service one person can render another. Something must have been wrong in her theory or it could not have been so sadly out of gear by a few chance words. She really owed him gratitude for having called her attention to its weakness. She would work the problem out from this new angle. She would talk it over with him.

She realized that he was occupying a larger and ever larger share of her attention. It was typical of her that she thought of him in terms of making him over, of reforming him. Her new respect for him, as an intellectual being, made her feel more keenly than ever that there was some form of waste about his manner of life. Surely there was a more worth-while occupation for him than collecting Oriental poems! What ought he to do to utilize his talents to the best advantage? It was an interesting problem. She was inclined to think that the trouble with him was the lack of a proper ambition. But she did not want to jump at conclusions. She must study him a bit. She would have to see more of him, get to know him better.

She realized, with an annoyed smile, that she had not made a promising beginning. He did not like her. But this seemed a small matter. She generally had her way with men. Her difficulty had never been in overcoming their dislike for her. It had been just the opposite — struggling against their disposition to like her too uncomfortably much. Make him like her? Why, if she set her mind to it she could make him fall in love!

But she formed no such projects. All she wanted was "to take him in hand" — for his own good. She would win his good will and then draw to the surface those values which she was convinced were hidden within him. This amiable plan for his remodeling quite restored her good temper.

Jefferson Market clock was striking one o'clock when she let herself, very quietly, into the Flat. She

was at once the *qui vive* — disturbed. A streak of light shone below Eunice's door. She tiptoed down the hallway and pushed the door open. Eunice had been in bed, for it was disordered, but now she was sitting in a heap on the lounge, wrapped in an eider-down robe and a blanket. She had tied a towel about her head. Her two wonderful braids of hair escaped from it down into her lap. She was staring rigidly, aimlessly at the wall.

"What's the matter, dear?" Helen asked, in deep concern. "Another bad spell?"

Eunice shook herself out of her reverie at the words and shrugged her shoulders, without answering.

"Did that man stay till you were worn out?"

"Oh, no! Pete and Win came in after dinner and took him away — early. I'm all right — just don't feel sleepy. Don't talk to me or I'll cry."

As she spoke the tears overflowed. It was the first time Helen had ever seen her cry. Often Helen had sat by her bed and watched her, her lips tight pressed, quivering now and then with a wave of pain, but always she had been dry-eyed.

"Eunice, dear," she said, sitting down beside her and throwing an arm about her. "What has happened?"

"Happened? Nothing has happened! Nothing ever does. Oh, I'm a cry-baby! But it's hard, too hard, to keep a stiff upper lip all the time."

"Dearie, you don't have to keep your lip still for me. I understand."

Eunice jerked herself away from Helen's encircling arm.

“No! You don’t understand. Thank your gods, that you never have understood and never will — what it means to be always sick! It isn’t the suffering — oh, the pain’s easy. It’s knowing you’re sick. It wouldn’t be so bad if the brain were sick, too — too sick to dream and desire. But I want things — my brain’s healthy enough for that! I want to live, to be a regular person, to laugh and cry, and struggle and suffer, like other people — to be a woman! And always the body says ‘No!’ No, you’ll never understand that, you can’t! It’s too hideous for a well person to conceive. Oh, I want life!” — she stretched out her arms in a gesture of pure tragedy — “And — and I’m already half dead!”

The excitement which had made all her muscles tense suddenly relaxed. She crumpled up, her face in Helen’s lap, her frail body shaking with soul-rending sobs.

Helen sat there silent, stroking her hair, sometimes lifting the great coils to her lips, looking out the while, through a mist of unshed tears, at a new and more poignant realization of the cruelties life can contrive. Eunice’s vehemence frightened her. Her heart within her wrung its hands. Eunice had always been so calm, had taken the limitations the Fates imposed on her with such quiet dignity — as a matter of course, to which she had become accustomed. Helen had thought that habit had dulled the hurt. And now she knew that Eunice was right. She had never understood, never would understand, what it means to know yourself in-valid.

Vaguely she wondered what had stirred the storm.

What had shaken Eunice to so sudden and unusual a burst of bitterness? She could find no answer. And besides, speculations would do no good.

"Dearest," Helen, the practical one, said, "hadn't I best put you to bed and give you some drops?"

In spite of what Dr. Riggs had told her, Helen still dreaded the drug. When Eunice asked for it, she administered it with unspoken reluctance nervously, laughing gayly the while and talking of this and that and nothing at all. It was for her a distressful proceeding. She never suggested it.

But this night, troubled beyond bearing by the sight of Eunice's psychological suffering, she herself proposed the drug which would bring surcease — as she had never been able to do on behalf of mere physical pain. Eunice did not want to be put to sleep, she wished Helen would go away and leave her with her woe. But she knew it would be useless to resist.

If the Stranger could have watched as Helen, in her resplendent gown of black and jet, her bare shoulders gleaming in the electric light, smoothed out the crumpled bed with strong, gentle hands, unwrapped the blanket and robe from about Eunice, tucked her in bed, her two braids outside the warm covers, with precise care measured out the sleeping draught and steadied her with an arm about the shoulders as she drank it and then tucked her in once more and kissed her, he would have thought much more highly of her than he did.

Helen turned off the light and went to her own room to undress, but she returned at once and drew up a chair beside the bed.

"Oh, don't sit up," Eunice protested peevishly. "I'm all right. I'll be asleep in a minute. You've got to work in the morning. I'll ring if I want anything."

"I'm going to smoke a cigarette before I turn in," Helen said firmly.

A faint light shone into the room from the street lamps. As Helen lit her cigarette and sank back comfortably in her chair, she heard a movement in the bed and turning saw Eunice stretch out her hand. She took it in hers, kissed it lightly and, still keeping tight hold of it, put it back under the covers.

"Nell," Eunice said dreamily, "you're the goodest person in the world and the most wonderful. I'm a little wretch to cry — having you."

"I'm not nearly as good as somebody I know right here in this room — nor so wonderful. I'm not wonderful at all. I made a frightful mess of my speech to-night. It was a flat failure — fierce!"

"I don't believe it."

"Yes, it was. Go to sleep and I'll tell you about it in the morning."

The clasp on her hand tightened and then very gradually relaxed. Before Helen's cigarette had burned out, the drug had performed its miracle of mercy. She disengaged her hand gently, opened the window, made sure the covers were close about Eunice's chin, kissed her again, and went to her room.

After she had turned off her own light and had made herself snug for the night, her thoughts reverted to Lane. And, as though she were speaking to him,

she said to herself: "I may be wrong about my Gospel of Efficiency and I certainly made a pitiful fizzle of my speech to-night — but at least I'm some good to Eunice."

CHAPTER XIII

THE CAFE

When Pete and Win had arrived at the Flat on this memorable evening, they had both noticed that Eunice looked tired. So early in the evening they took Lane away with them to the Café Santa Fe.

There they discovered Lancaster and Frank talking earnestly at one of the tables.

"I'm surprised, Lancaster," Pete said, "to find a serious-minded Socialist like you spending your evening in this giddy whirl."

"I'm not spending my evening here," Lancaster said stiffly. "Frank and I have been talking over the poster he is doing for the Russian mass meeting. We had just finished and I'm going home to work."

"Don't apologize," Pete said. "I'll forgive you."

Lancaster was about to protest when Lane spoke up.

"When can I find you at leisure, Professor Lancaster? I want to have a talk with you."

"Good! Any time you set. I'll make leisure."

"Oh, it is nothing important. You asked about my Russian experiences. They were not much but ——"

"Lancaster's work this evening isn't really as important as he thinks," Pete interrupted. "He has time to burn. Why not sit down here and tell all of us?"

"Sure," Win said. "Why not? If you don't mind an audience. We're all interested."

The ubiquitous Alphonse brought up chairs and stood at attention, waiting for orders.

"If you do not mind," Lane said, "I will take water."

"I have done everything wrong," he said, as his little audience settled down. "I seem to have built up considerable suspense — for my least interesting story. My going to Russia was quite accidental. In Robert College I made friends with an Armenian boy, and one time I went to visit him in his home in the Caucasus — in the hills above Koutafs. His father was a revolutionist. When he found that I could speak the Tatar language he asked me to carry a letter for him to some friends in Moscow."

"Most of the waiters in Russia are Tatar boys — they are Muslim and so do not drink. One has to be very sober to wait on such drunkards as the Russians. These Tatar waiters have something like the old guilds of Europe. They have their own laws and customs. They are not interested in politics, so the secret police never trouble them."

"It was easy for me to travel in that rôle. I did not know what was in that letter. I did not care. I was only sixteen or so. It was great fun for me. I had never been in a railroad train before. It was the first Christian country I had seen. Bulgarian, which I had learned at college from the boys, is very like Russian, so the language came easy. I had no trouble with the police."

"As soon as I reached Moscow, I found a job in a

hotel — The Slavansky Bazaar. The next day, as soon as I had a little time off, I went to the address my Armenian friends had given me. There were half a dozen people in the house — all very excited. The police were on Inslavsky's trail and had followed him there. I saw them watching at the door as I came in. The friends were very anxious to have Inslavsky escape. I do not understand their organization, but he seemed to be their chief. It appealed to my boyish spirit of adventure and I proposed to help them out. I put my Tatar cap in my pocket, took his overcoat and hat, which the police were sure to recognize; put on some dark glasses, so they would think it was a disguise, and went out — stooping like an old man.

“Of course they might have arrested me at once. But it was morning and they generally trail along after a suspect all day to discover his friends. They followed me. I led them to the hotel where I was working. Of course — the police are so stupid — they waited outside. I went down in the cellar, burned Inslavsky's things in a stove, put on my Tatar cap, and, standing up straight, walked out past them. It was so easy.

“I ran back to the house where I had left Inslavsky. I disguised him as an old Tatar beggar — deaf and dumb. It was the time for the Hadj, so we joined a crowd of Persian and Tatar pilgrims and got safely to Odessa. It was simple.

“Inslavsky thought I was a Tatar boy — till we were safe in the Bosphorus. When we were in sight of Constantinople I told him about my father. He wanted me to come with him to Switzerland, to get

a Western education. But I did not like what I had seen of Christian lands in Russia. So I gave him the slip in Constantinople and went back to Robert College.

"Inslavsky makes too much of it. Being only a boy, it was fun for me — outwitting the police — a game, like playing tag. I did not know what I was doing nor how serious it was. And one feels a little ashamed of having played with so serious a thing.

"I have never been to Russia again. So you see I do not know anything about the politics."

Of course he could have held them spellbound with stories of "The Brothers of the Hills." Even his experiences in Russia had not been as colorless as he pretended, but his interest in such things was so different from theirs. His memories were all of his own heart and how it had suffered in those days of his Great Test. The bare events did not interest him.

If, for instance, some one had announced that on the eighth of May, 1894, he had chopped his grandmother to pieces with a meat ax, which had cost \$1.39, and had given no explanation, it would not have stirred Lane. But it would have interested him vividly if the person had told why he did it, how he felt at the time, and what he thought of the exploit now. An uninterpreted fact was dead to Lane.

He could not tell them about that obscure, unrecorded fight amid the snow peaks of the Caucasus. It had been a great spiritual experience to him. He had been terribly afraid. It was a vivid, poignant memory of which he could not speak lightly. It was not a subject for casual conversation. These men

might ask him what make of rifle he had used to kill his man or the date of the affair, or some such banal question.

His lack of enthusiasm for talking of Russia was so manifest that Lancaster switched to his own specialty.

"I'm writing a book on 'Coöperation among Primitive People.' I've heard that the Berbers of Southern Morocco have a communistic arrangement for their irrigation — joint ownership of the water."

"Oh, yes," Lane said, welcoming the change of subject. "My father had a farm in the Glawi — the High Atlas. It is mine now. There is little rain, so we have to irrigate all the time — streams which come down from the snow mountains — they are all caught in a big ditch and we have small ditches, running off to our fields. The *Raïs el-ma* — the water captain — superintends it all; tells each farmer how many hours he can have his ditch flooded. We measure water that way — by the hour."

"How does he decide how many hours each farmer is to get? Is the distribution just? Or do the rich farmers bribe the water captain for more than their share?"

"It is all traditional. There are not more than fifty farmers in our valley. None are really rich. I suppose the biggest farm is twice the size of mine — and that supports a large family. Every one knows how many hours he had last year. The *Raïs el-ma* would not dare to change the rule for a bribe. Those who were cheated would surely kill him. It is permitted to kill in defense of life — and water is

life for us. No, the water captain is just — he has to be.”

“Isn't that fine?” Lancaster demanded of the others. “Nobody makes water, everybody needs it. We ought to own it in common. It's just like air.”

“Not quite,” Lane demurred. “There is plenty of air and not quite enough water.”

“So much the more reason why every one should have a just share. It is better than letting one man monopolize the water — use what he wants and sell the rest at exorbitant prices.”

“Yes,” Lane agreed, “that is the way so many things are done here. If one man owned all the water the rest of us would have to starve or work for him — be his slaves — like your factory workers. Our scheme is better than that.”

“How do you choose the water captain?” Win asked. “Democratically?”

“Well, no, you could hardly call it that. The men of the tribe — the farmers — choose him every year at the Great Feast. In a way it is democratic. But there are never two candidates. There is rarely more than one man mean enough in a valley. No one wants to be *Raïs el-ma* unless he is a miser. Whenever there is a dispute over water — and there are always disputes — the *Raïs* must decide. And surely one of the disputants will be angry. In the course of a year every one has quarreled with him.

“Before the Great Feast they begin to discuss who shall be our *Raïs* next year. All agree that it must not be the same man — whom everybody hates. But no one else is willing. It is always the same —

every year. So at last the elders ask him. 'No,' he says, 'I am getting old. I am tired of quarrels. I want to die in peace.' They talk of nothing else for weeks. On the feast day they go to him again. 'Be our *Raïs* and we will give you another hour of water.' 'No,' he says, 'two extra hours.' They haggle all day long and get very angry.

"When I was a little boy, our *Raïs* died. They had to go to another valley, another tribe, to find a man mean enough. They had to give him a farm and much water."

"Nevertheless," Lancaster said, "it is a very interesting experiment in rudimentary Socialism."

"I do not know much about Socialism," Lane said. "Only a few books. It is true our farmers have common ownership of the water. But they have more hatred, more fights, over that than over the land which they own privately. I would rather be poorer — not have so much water — if I could have more friends."

"You're discouraging," Pete said, with a grin. He was not a Socialist and enjoyed Lancaster's discomfort. "He was hoping to make a chapter in his book on the beauties of water Socialism in Morocco. But I'm afraid you know too much about it for his purpose."

"Not at all," Lancaster retorted hotly. "This is very interesting. What do a few petty quarrels matter compared to the freedom from wage slavery?"

"Some of the valleys are not so bad as ours," Lane said. "The people may not be so rich, but they quarrel less and are more happy. Always in such com-

munities you will find a wise old man who teaches the people to be friends. The water captain is good, but a friendship captain is better. That is a sort of Socialism, too, I think."

The thought that this little circle might break up frightened Lane, as a child is frightened, who must go alone into the dark. In a way which was entirely new to him, he dreaded the idea of solitude. The thinking out of all the new things which his love for Eunice meant was a task he was reluctant to face. It seemed overwhelming. So he strove to hold the attention of his audience.

"I've only read a few books about Socialism," he said. "The part I like best is the idea of brotherhood between nations. 'To know all is to forgive all,' one of your wise men has said. If the nations knew each other better there would not be any wars.

"The differences between the West and the East are very dangerous. My people do not know or understand you, so they despise you. Perhaps some of your disdain for us is due to lack of familiarity. Sometimes I hear discussions of the relative merits of the two civilizations — which is the better? That seems to me a silly question. Each of us might be so much better than we are. Neither of us have so very much reason to be proud. But the differences are great and must be understood before we can have any real Brotherhood of Man.

"Your writers speak of the incomprehensible East. But the West is quite as hard for us to comprehend. I am baffled. There is so much of your life I marvel at. You are wonderfully skillful at many things —

what Miss Cash 'calls 'efficient.' But sometimes it is not easy to understand what you are striving for.

"Many of the things you do most earnestly — the things you boast of — seem aimless to us. Do you not sometimes forget that sugar is sweet when you tear it to pieces — analyze it? I think much of life's sweetness is lost in your test tubes."

McGee, who had enjoyed it when Lancaster's Socialism was under fire, could not sit silent when the scientific spirit was attacked.

"Just because we have melted up tons of sugar in our laboratories — destroyed it, as you say — we've learned its composition and how to double the amount of sweetness we get out of each sugar cane. We've invented saccharine and discovered beet sugar. We've increased the sweetness of life. What went into the test tubes wasn't wasted."

"Perhaps not," Lane said. "But this is one great difference between our attitudes toward life. Your interest in the composition of matter leaves us cold. The energy which you put into scientific research we utilize in other ways, which seem more worthy to us. We all have watched the moon rise. You have measured and weighed her, have found out what she is made of — we have written poems in praise of her surpassing loveliness."

"We're not all scientific," Frank put in. "Some of us — thank God! — hate this dominance of the scientific spirit. Do you know this?"

"Shall I, the last Endymion, lose all hope,
Because rude eyes peer at my mistress through a telescope?
What profit, if this scientific age

Burst through our gates with all its retinue
Of modern miracles! Can it assuage
One lover's breaking heart? What can it do
To make one life more beautiful, one day
More god-like in its period? . . .

"There are a whole lot of people in America — their number grows all the time — for whom that kind of talk is the straight gospel. I'm a Socialist. And this spirit of revolt we're trying to organize, all the unrest of our day, is just a yearning for beauty. In our hearts we know that our manner of life — our civilization — is hideous. And the soul of man hungers for beauty."

"Yes," Lane said. "I know you have your poets. And, we, of course, have our gross materialists. But on the whole, you erect monuments to your poets after they have starved to death — if you do not cast them into prison. We honor ours while they live. We rank poetry above science."

"Sour grapes! Just because your people do not understand science," Lancaster said scornfully, "is no reason to cry it down."

"Ah," Lane laughed, "the fox and the sour grapes? That fable hardly applies. We taught you science. Before America was discovered, when the people of Europe thought the earth was flat, there were long-established astronomical observatories in China, India, Babylonia, Egypt where the movements of the planets had been observed and recorded. During the Dark Ages of Christendom, Bagdad and Cordova were the scientific centers of the world. When at last the awakening came to the Christian peoples, they had to

sit at the feet of the Saracens for what they naïvely called the 'New Knowledge.' Translations from the Arabic were the textbooks of the Renaissance.

"Take mathematics, for instance. Of all the scientific words you have borrowed from us — 'Algebra,' 'Chemistry,' 'Almanack,' 'Azimuth,' 'Nadir' — the most important of all was 'Zero.' We of the East were the first to understand that 'nothing' — 'naught' — is a number. You call your numerals Arabic, in recognition of the debt. How far would you have gone in your marvelous computations if you had not learned the decimal system from us? Try, for instance, to solve a simple problem in long division with your Western, Roman numerals.

"We have little science in the East to-day, but clearly it is not because we are incapable of it. No," he laughed again, "the sour grapes fable hardly fits."

"Well," Lancaster said, "you scored on me there. I had for the moment forgotten our debt to your ancestors. But how do you explain the present decadence of your science?"

"We do not call it 'decadence,'" Lane replied quickly. He understood that the best way to hold their attention was to stir their combativeness. "Decline? No! We think we have progressed. We have outgrown science — mere curiosity about the material world.

"It is certainly the most interesting point in our history — perhaps in the history of the race. The change came to us abruptly. Al Ghazzali — our Great Reformer — died in 1100. He had been a pro-

fessor in the University of Bagdad, the most famous scholar of his day. His colleagues, recognizing his tremendous erudition, called him 'The Flower of Philosophy.' At that time Christendom had no scientists. Quite suddenly he gave up the prestige of his honorable position, the favor of the worldly Caliph, and went out into the desert to meditate. He became a *Sufi* — a mystic. If you are interested you can find two of his books translated — they are called 'The Confessions of Al Ghazzali' and 'The Alchemy of Happiness.' Since his day — under his influence — the great mass of my people have given up scientific research and have sought knowledge in the mystic way — the path of God.

"I have read Al Ghazzali's writings and all I could find by his immediate followers and commentators. As near as I can understand their thought, they were bored by science — profoundly disillusioned. Mohammed had told us to revere learning, that the search for knowledge would lead us to God. But their study of the stars, of medicine, of physics, of numbers had not brought them nearer to God. It seemed to be leading in the opposite direction. So they turned their back on the Old Learning — which the West was to call 'New' when they discovered it — and gave their attention to the heart of man. After all, the simplest man is more like God than the most magnificent star. And so the most scientific people the race had produced were converted to mysticism."

"Well," McGee asked, "do you think it was a wise change?"

"That leads back to the discussion of which of our civilizations is the better — which I think is silly. We have wise men and fools, sinners and saints, and so have you — men to be proud of and those of whom we are ashamed.

"Your science has given you the better battleships — without doubt — the dominance of the world. But that is not argument. You cannot convince us that way. We are used to being conquered. You are not the first to invade our shores, to rule us — to try to educate us. You will not be the first to fail in this amiable enterprise. The Romans tried and failed before Mohammed was born. The Phœnicians tried and failed before Romulus laid the foundations of the young city you call Eternal. You will fail, too. The East is defenseless — but very stubborn.

"We do not envy you the power of your artillery. In fact, of all your marvelous machinery, it is that we envy least. I have seen regiments of white soldiers — English in Egypt, French in Morocco. Their equipment was wonderful — scientific. But they seemed dominated by it. Which were the more enslaved? Those sweating Westerners with their heavy loads of machines or the crowds that lined the streets, curious, unafraid, a little disdainful — the people they thought they had conquered?"

No one answered his question, and Lane switched back to the former subject.

"I am interested to read how some of your scientists — like Sir Oliver Lodge — express dissatisfaction with the results of science and turn their attention to the mysteries of psychology."

"That's all poppycock," Lancaster said emphatically. He regarded all societies for psychical research as personal insults. "It has no significance."

"When a scientist goes in for that," McGee said, agreeing with Lancaster in this matter, "it means old-age — second-childhood!"

"We have great respect for old men in the East," Lane said.

Lancaster looked up at the clock. He had a pile of work on his desk at home, which he had planned to attend to this evening. Lane saw the direction of his glance, understood its import, and made a new effort to hold them.

"There is another impressive contrast between your civilization and ours — your indifference to religion. My people are so instinctively devout that we do not even have a word for 'Atheist.' We have terms for 'Idolator,' for 'Polytheist,' for 'Those without knowledge of the true God,' but none to describe an intelligent person who does not believe in any god."

"The concept of God," Lancaster said, "has dropped out of our intellectual life because we don't need it. It is no longer useful. It has atrophied. In the old days men imagined gods to explain the things they could not understand. When it lightened, primitive man was scared by the flash. It seemed supernatural to him. So he invented a god, to explain it. He couldn't understand the noise of the wind in the trees, so he pretended it was the gods singing. But now we do understand these things. We can make better music than the wind. In our laboratories we have domesticated electricity — the

stuff lightning is made of. The laboratories are the burying ground of the gods.

"That's what science means — the twilight of the gods — the elimination from our habits of thought of all unproved hypotheses. You say the East has turned away from science intentionally. Well, I'm sorry for you — not at all because science has given us the better battleships — but because it shows us how to live reasonably in a reasonable universe. It's Reason versus Unreason.

"You say that the Orientals respect old age. You also respect lunacy. Modern science passes a very clear verdict on the prophets. Mohammed was undoubtedly a great statesman and probably sincere in his religious beliefs. But it is even more sure that he had epileptic fits. It was the same with Christian saints. Most of them were unbalanced — some were perverts.

"There are hundreds of people in our asylums to-day who see visions, who believe — just as sincerely as Mohammed or St. Francis — that they talk with God. Just as science has freed us from reverence for the thunderstorm, so it has robbed insanity of its glamour. We know just what nerve cells are affected, just what process of physiological decay is in process. We don't believe nowadays that people who act queerly or froth at the mouth are 'possessed by devils' nor 'inspired by God.' We put them in asylums, treat them kindly, and more and more we are learning to cure them.

"Religion asks us to take the hysterical ravings of St. Theresa as seriously as the logic of Newton and

Darwin. The Bible says that 'out of the mouths of babes and sucklings' God has perfected His wisdom. I prefer the reasoned convictions of sane men in their prime. I don't base my life on childish prattle, pathological visions, nor old men's dotage."

There was finality in Lancaster's tone as though these were the last words on the subject. But before any one could speak, he went on:

"Intelligent people to-day don't even think about God. The modern mind has lost the habit of theological argument. Once there was need for militant freethinkers. As long as the Church was strong enough to forbid Galileo to think, it was necessary to fight it, to argue against its lying fairy tales, to expose its crooked hypocrisies. We had to waste time from serious work fighting over the religious issue. Every one who thought at all had to think about this God problem. But the Heaven stormers of a generation ago did their work well. The battle is won. They succeeded, if not in absolutely destroying a belief in God, at least in overthrowing the tyranny of the idea.

"Now we can go on with the serious work of the world without wasting time and energy fighting God. Most of us have forgotten what little theology we ever knew. We can afford to ignore such things."

"I wonder?" Lane said. "It seems to me that ignoring the religious impulse is very like putting a fig leaf over a most vital part of life."

Then, to restore Lancaster's good humor, he began an account of some strange primitive religious ceremonies he had observed in his wanderings.

It was not often that any of his little audience sat up till closing time in a café. They were hardworking people, who rose early. But, strangely reluctant to be left alone, Lane held them brilliantly this evening for close to four hours.

He gave Lockwood some new ideas on *Æsthetics* by calling Japanese art the apotheosis of artificiality. He contrasted their landscape gardening with that of his own people. The Moor, he said, had sensibilities so refined that he could satisfy his soul's hunger with natural beauty. He argued that a true artistic sense found more beauty in the eternal hills than the cleverest Jap could contrive with a careful pile of stones and a handmade fountain, containing preposterous, perverted goldfish. A tuft of wild narcissus, he held, or a garden weed, growing as God, the Great Artist, had planned was more worthy of contemplation than an ingeniously dwarfed pine tree in a porcelain pot.

He explained to Win that the literature of his people was primarily oral, that only the least of its riches could be reduced to paper. Whenever Lancaster's attention wavered, he recaptured it with some anecdote about Russia or some ethnological data from Morocco.

About the time Helen was falling to sleep, Alphonse, the waiter, began to turn out the lights.

On the sidewalk, Lancaster and Frank said good night. Win and Pete and Lane set off toward the Square. Lane was on the point of inviting them to his rooms for some Turkish coffee, but Pete forestalled him with the news that he had to catch a seven o'clock train for Albany.

After this Lane could not ask them to prolong the séance. So, reluctantly, he said good night in the hallway before their door and went into his rooms alone.

CHAPTER XIV

THE STRANGER'S "KEEF"

Alone in his room, Lane took off his collar and shoes for comfort and, sitting down cross-legged on the couch, he composed himself to immobility and thought. In the East they call this process of concentrating the mind on one subject, of drugging oneself with thought, "making *keef*." He began the inevitable process of pondering over this new experience which had come to him. He had postponed the ordeal as long as possible, but now there seemed no further escape. However he had not gotten far in his "*keef*" when he was interrupted by the arrival of Ali Zaky Bey.

No two Westerners so utterly dissimilar could have lived together in peace. The Turks and Moors are farther apart than French and Germans. The young Bey had been corrupted by a course of study in the *Ecole des hautes sciences politiques* at Paris. He had lost faith in the god of his fathers and had found no substitute. Enthusiastically accepting all the vices of our Christian civilization, he had become a sensualist of the flesh. He was less typical Eastern than Lane who — to use a phrase unknown in our Western speech, but common enough in Oriental tongues — had remained a sensualist of the spirit.

But in remote journeyings, we accept strange travel mates. New York City was to these two men a momentary halting place in a far country. Moreover, the pay of a scholar is not large and, by combining forces with Ali Zaky, Lane had been able to escape from the hideous promiscuity of a boarding house.

This evening the Turk had been partaking too freely of the sparkling vintage of the Infidels. It happened all too frequently.

"I've been spending a gay evening with the shameless ones," he said in Turkish, half boastfully, half ashamed. Ali Zaky's title and his red tarboosh, which lent a bizarre touch of color to social functions, were definite assets in certain New York circles. He told of his evening's entertainment with words and tones which suggested a most disreputable affair. In reality it had been a dance for a young *débutante* and what we are in the habit of calling "respectable."

"You make a mistake, Hadji Kassim," he said. "In the land of the Roumi do as the Roumi do. Has not the poet said, 'Beauty hath no religion'? And some of the women of the Franks are beautiful. There was one to-night — the daughter of the host, who resembled a Circassian slave girl of my father's. Hair like a flood of sunlight — and half naked. What a show she made of herself! She danced with all men who asked her, and smiled at them wantonly when they embraced her. It was most amusing to observe. My mother — ha! ha — she does not think highly of the women of the Infidels, but if I should tell her what my eyes have seen to-night she would not be-

lieve it. No, she would say such shamelessness was impossible. You should come with me some night, Hadji Kassim. You should get acquainted with these Christian women."

"I dined with one to-night."

"And was she half unclothed?"

"No," Lane said sternly. "She is not a shameless one." And then he lied deliberately. "She is my betrothed."

"A thousand pardons, Hadji," Ali Zaky exclaimed in real embarrassment. "I did not know."

Although he had the Turkish contempt for all other Islamic peoples, although he knew that Hadji Kassim was a child of the despised Franks, although his views on most matters had been sadly twisted by his disordered life among the Unbelievers, he knew that his roommate was a good man. And he respected piety, even if he did not practice it. He might soil himself with drunkenness, he might, in order to appear liberal-minded, scoff at the beliefs of his own people, he might make free with every Koranic law, but he was, at bottom, a Muslim.

Lane had lied, knowing that so he could protect the woman he loved from Ali Zaky's insults, insults which he flung carelessly at all Christian women, insults of which "shameless" was the least. The Bey would not again refer to the "*hareem*"—the woman who was "reserved." But this evening the champagne had unduly loosed the reins of his curiosity.

"Is it," he asked, "that you will become a renegade?"

"Why should I? Did not the Prophet himself—

on him be peace — take a woman of the Franks to wife? ”

“ Is it that you will live in this detestable land? ”

“ It has not been decided.”

Ali Zaky Bey did not often use the formulæ of his religion. He had lost the habit. But some obscure impulse stirred him to put out his hands as if holding the Holy Book and to recite *Fatihah*.

“ Bis-m-illah !

Praise be to God, the Lord of all creatures,

The most Compassionate of the Merciful,

King of the Judgment Day.

Thee do we worship and of Thee do we ask guidance.

Lead us in the True Path,

In the Way of those on whom is Thy Grace.

Not in the Path of the unrighteous

Nor in that of those who have gone astray.”

“ May the rich blessing of the Compassionate be upon thee, Hadji Kassim, and upon thy Beloved.”

And the Bey went to his room.

The one who had been blessed bestirred himself to draw a taborette close to his couch and to light a hubble-bubble pipe. He settled down once more to that process of making “ *keef*,” a frame of mind incomprehensible to us, which Arab poets eulogize under the term “enjoying dejection.”

Love had come to him and he luxuriated in the melancholy its hopelessness demanded. He was not disturbed by the Bey's fear that this Christian woman would ask him to repudiate his faith. Nor was he depressed over the problem of where love would ask him to go. Inevitably he yearned for his own coun-

try, for his high valley in the mountains of Glawi, with snow peaks all around, or for the little house in Marakesh, where at prayer time one could hear the minor chant of the blind children in the Zawïa of their patron, Sidi bel Abbas. From his house in Marakesh the view of the Atlas range was broader, if more distant. The skyscrapers which men have built are indeed wonderful — but God's mountains are wondrous.

However love, as he understood it, entirely transcends geography. He wanted to be with her, to commune with her. Where their paradise was laid did not matter. Yes, he would have preferred his mountains, but the vivid intimacy with her of which he dreamed would have glorified even the hideousness of a city flat.

It was not such material considerations which appalled him, but all the subtle psychological implications which surround love — so vastly different in the East and West. Just as almost all our travelers who have told of Oriental life have been baffled by the Eastern attitude towards love, sometimes attracted by the rich figures of their amorous verse, sometimes repelled by their frank, biblical eroticism, but never understanding, so Lane was baffled by what he had seen in the West.

He sat there the night through smoking out and refilling his hubble-bubble pipe, his soul a quiet flame of longing for this woman, who understood. His life, which he now saw had been aimless, merely inquisitive, had found a center. All his vagrant impulses, his vagabond desires, had been unified.

But what hope could he have of love's fulfillment? There were so many things he did not comprehend. Above all he was perplexed by the celibacy he saw about him. He was a rarity among his own people, because, already over thirty, he had no children. Win and Pete, both older than he, were unmarried. He had not been told of the strange relation between Irene and Lancaster. The Lockwoods were childless. Why so many unmarried women? Helen must have been sought in marriage. Apparently, she preferred celibacy and childlessness. And why was Eunice unmarried? Many men, he thought, must have loved her. And if she had refused men of her own people, what chance had a stranger?

More than once he had heard slighting, scornful remarks about matrimony. They threw jibes at Pete because, although he was nearing forty, he was betrothed — as though he had betrayed the ideals of the group, lowered himself in some way. Lane did not understand.

The real obstacle which stood in the way of his desire did not even occur to him. Eunice's confession of ill health had not daunted him. Of course if he had been a poor peasant, and had needed a wife to hitch beside an ass to his plow, he would have wanted a robust wife. But fortunately there was no such need.

And so he sat in exquisite dejection until dawn.

With the early light, he shook himself out of his reverie to serve her. She wanted those pictures of the Children's Fête at Marakesh. This trifling thing was something to do for her. He made long and care-

ful explanatory notes on each photograph. About nine he finished the task and, summoning a messenger boy, sent the package and his notes to her address.

He might, of course, have taken them himself. In not doing so he obeyed a complex of motives. Partly it was because he wanted to gain time, the procrastination of the East. He could not rush toward this Holy Adventure. But more it was because he wanted the word to come from her.

Having grown up among people who are self-conscious and outspoken to themselves in regard to their emotions, he had no doubt that Eunice would understand how he felt, in the same certain way she had understood him in less obvious matters. He had no conception of the manifold inhibitions which would keep her from admitting such things to herself. He felt, just as our most modern psychologists are telling us, that it is unnatural to suppress such emotions. There is very little hysteria in the East. He thought that Eunice would think of love in the same, simple, direct way he did.

It must be evident to her that he loved her. "Surely it must be evident," he would have said, if any doubt had entered his mind. She could see that he loved her. It did not occur to him to tell her this in words—as a matter of information. It would have seemed to him grotesque to do so.

She would know and understand. Love had no meaning to him, if it were not mutual. And seeing things thus, feeling so much at sea among our Western ways, he waited for word from her.

CHAPTER XV

FRANK GOES HOME

Of Lane's little audience in the café, Frank had been the one most impressed. It was not what had been said to him directly which mattered. His artistic faiths were too firm to be shaken. Nor had he been influenced by the theological discussion. He was too simple-minded a pagan to care whether God be one or three. His own goddess was so very real to him that he did not worry about other deities. Nor was it the controversy over the water communism of the Berbers which had impressed him. He called himself a Socialist, but he was not interested in its economic implications. The life about him seemed so full of hideousness that he felt akin to any one who preached revolt. He had been pleased to hear Lane so calmly speak slightly of science. He did not know much about the matter, but he hated science, because the age in which he lived and suffered is called the Scientific Age.

Of more importance than any one part of the Stranger's discourse had been its totality, its general criticism of the organization and ideals of Christendom. In sharp contrast to all Frank's friends, this man, Lane, did not take our Western civilization for granted. He cast doubts on the assumptions on which it is based.

In a vague way, which he would not have expressed in words even to himself, Frank felt oppressed and outraged. And, if he accepted the structure of life about him — took it for granted, as his friends did — he could find no escape from his predicament. This Stranger questioned not only the superstructure of our society, but its very foundations. This was what thrilled Frank, and disturbed him.

His silent, smoldering pain was intensified by the fact that no one took note of it. Even his nearest friends did not recognize, or pretended not to recognize, the tragedy of his life. They could not look things frankly in the face without finding evidence in conflict with all their assumptions — the things they took for granted.

Unfulfillment! Arrested development! He was sore with the knowledge of what he might have been. His pictures, which people praised from his "Study in Moonlight Grays" in the Corcoran to his portrait of Lillian in the Metropolitan, all three, he knew, had been only a beginning, the first stuttering prayers he had learned to lisp — "Now I lay me down to sleep." Men praised these things of his, these first essays at devotion. Why was he not left free to pray now? — in his maturity! He suffered from psalms unsung.

Life had laid hold on him, had interrupted, silenced his devotions. Life, the organized life of civilization, had gagged him. Society was an Inquisition which forbade him to worship as he would.

This Stranger cast doubts on all the sanctions to which he was expected to submit.

If it had not been a bitter winter night, he would

have sat for a while in the Square to think things out. He did not want to go home. He knew what to expect. But it was too cold to tramp the streets, the cafés were all closed. What is there for a respectable member of society to do when he has been out inordinately late but to go home to his wife? Frank could think of nothing else to do. So he went — as a sheep to the shambles.

He let himself quietly into the house. He had a furtive impulse to take off his shoes and try to reach his room without attracting Lillian's attention. But he hated sneakiness. He made unnecessary noise as he went upstairs.

"Frank."

"Yes, dear."

"Where *have* you been?"

"Over at the Santa Fe."

He came on up the stairs more quietly.

"Have you been drinking?"

"I'm quite sober."

In fact, since his marriage, Frank had always been sober. But Lillian, having heard tales of his youthful wildness and knowing he was unhappy, was morbidly afraid he would take to drink again.

"Come here," she called.

He went into her bedroom. Even her expression of vexation could not rob her face of its beauty. Frank realized this in a queer, impersonal way, as though it were a fact about some one else's wife.

"It's after one — I've been horribly worried."

"Why should you be worried, dear? I'm able to find my way around. I won't get lost."

"Well, kiss me good night."

It was so humiliatingly obvious!

"Oh, that's unnecessary — my breath smells of whisky, all right."

"You said you'd not been drinking."

"I said I was quite sober. If you want the exact statistics, between 8.30 and 1 o'clock I had two glasses of coffee, two Scotch highballs."

"What have you been doing all this time?"

"Talking — a little. Listening mostly."

"Four hours — steady talking — what about?"

He could not have reproduced that conversation to her any more than he could have explained to the King of the Cannibal Islands the meaning of the verses he had quoted from Wilde. That was the heartbreak of it — she couldn't understand. That was the thing which kept him from putting his arms about her and kissing away her vexation.

"Lane came in," he said. "And told us about Morocco. Win and Pete were there, too. So — even if you can't trust Lancaster not to get me drunk — you see it was a respectable affair."

"You might have brought them over here. I was all alone."

In fact Lillian would not have objected so much if he had confessed that he had taken a chorus girl out to a champagne supper. She knew she did not have to worry about any other woman misleading him. She had him there. But she was desperately jealous of his men friends — especially of Win. She was hostile to all his interests in life, which she did

not understand. She felt that his mind ought to stay at home even more than his body.

"You leave me alone," he said, "every once in a while to go and see your people. Turn about is fair play."

He tried to make this statement sound light and conciliating.

"You won't come with me," she said, refusing to be mollified.

"Why should I?" he retorted, his will to make peace suddenly paralyzed. "I don't speak German. Your parents prefer to use it. I'm in the way. Besides, your mother doesn't like me."

"It isn't right for you to say that," Lillian sat up in bed. Still Frank was conscious that she was beautiful, although he knew she was launched on the subject he felt least disposed to argue. "She would like you all right, but she is disappointed in you. She was so ambitious for me to marry well. In the old days, when we were poor, it wasn't so bad. But now, mother is always thinking ——"

"Well, I'll say good night. I'm sorry I've disappointed your mother."

"If you really were sorry, if you cared at all for her feelings — or mine — you'd try to succeed. You could, you ——"

But Frank suddenly stiffened up.

"My dear, we won't discuss that at this hour. It's time both of us were asleep."

He turned to leave her. There had been in his voice a tone, which broke out at long intervals, which always frightened her into silence.

She was very angry. More than he realized, perhaps, because he had not kissed her good night. She lay awake a long time, feeling herself very ill used.

Frank also was angry, not at her, but at the inexplicable muddle of life, which had bound two such discordant people together. He was a good deal more sorry for her than angry *at* her. In the years since they had married, he had become acquainted with her. With a very profound realization of the values at stake for him, he had studied her, her character and the environment which had molded it. He had tried to understand the "why" of the things about her which were unlovely.

The same Fate which had molded her perfect exterior, had, in a mood of cruel irony, arranged to warp what was inside. Thirty odd years before, her father, Otto von Lehrenburg, having just won his doctor's degree with highest honors in the University of Berlin, had fallen tempestuously in love with, and had married, Marta Hoose. She was very beautiful, but so much the social inferior of the proud house of Von Lehrenburg that his father in a fit of rage had disowned him. A young doctor in physics, with no means and a socially inexpedient wife, had meager prospects in Germany, no matter how clever he might be.

So Dr. von Lehrenburg had come to America. For three years he and his family lived below the poverty line. The first child, a boy, had died. Then, forced by misery and the birth of Lillian, he had sold, at hold-up terms, an induction coil of his invention to one of our largest electrical companies. The number of his

patent is to be read on almost every telephone instrument in the world. It had been worth several thousand times as much to the company as they had paid him.

The directors of the company had eased their consciences by offering him a very good salary. But the contract gave them the right to any new inventions he might patent. With sullen obstinacy, feeling that they had dealt dishonestly with him in the first instance, he refused to accept their offer. From then on he had lived the precarious life of an inventor who lacks money to capitalize his ideas.

During the years they had been in America his income had averaged perhaps two thousand dollars. Some years it was more, some much less. So the family had been migratory. Mrs. von Lehrenburg had social ambitions. Whenever there was money in hand, she insisted on moving to a better apartment. She was continually nagging her husband to accept the offer of the electric company. Then they could have lived on the Drive. She had no comprehension of the point of honor which made him refuse to accept crumbs from those he thought had stolen his birth-right. She had no confidence in his hope of doing better by some future invention.

Many little girls have a joyous life whose fathers earn much less than Dr. von Lehrenburg. But her mother had brought Lillian up to feel that she was shamefully misused by fate. She had learned from her mother to think that her father was ineffectual, pig-headed, cruelly selfish.

It had from earliest childhood been impressed on

her that her only hope of escape from similarly sordid surroundings was by marrying more wisely than her mother had done. She had heard her mother bemoan her folly in marrying a fool on an average of at least once a day. Marriage — “a good marriage” — was the one salvation offered. Her face was her only fortune.

Lillian appreciated this fortune of hers at its full value. When she was a little girl, strangers stopped her on the street and went into ecstasies over her. As she had grown to young womanhood, she had been made continuously conscious of her beauty. It created a noticeable sensation for her to enter a street car. Men lost interest in their newspapers, in baseball scores, and Wall Street reports.

Her education had been a farce. Whenever the family moved into better quarters, she was sent to some cheap private school, which her mother fondly supposed to be ladylike. When the family had to move down in the social scale, Lillian was taken out of school. The public schools, where she might have learned something, were considered by her mother impossibly vulgar. She had learned little at home. The table talk had consisted of wrangles over how much money should go to her father's experiments and how much to her mother's desperate efforts to get up in the world.

The one ambition which Lillian had learned from her mother — the only one she could have formed in such circumstances — was to marry a man with enough money to save her from the petty, haggling distress she had always known at home.

Unfortunately that naked little imp, Cupid, had looked in through the window of the Studio while she posed for Frank and had shot arrows at them.

It had been the second day after the "private view," when he had shown the picture to his friends, that Frank had asked her to marry him. The idea had occurred to him suddenly. As he had boxed up his picture for shipment and had realized that he would no longer have even this shadow of her beauty to contemplate, he had felt terribly lonely. The thought of her passing out of his life permanently had been more than he could bear.

Lillian had played for this. Against her better judgment she had stumbled—one could hardly say "fallen"—in love with him. She was vain, and Frank, who was a specialist in such matters, said she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She was immensely flattered, she felt that she had never been properly admired before. There was a strange and intoxicating quality in his almost worshipful adoration. She was more than flattered by it, it stirred her like a caress. At night, alone in her room, the thought of it brought color to her cheeks. And he had seen only her face.

The very impersonality of his admiration piqued her. He studied her beauty intensely, but he never looked at her. It was necessary to stir him into a more human attitude. Her pride was engaged.

This was slippery ground. Before she realized it, her emotions had the whip hand over her reason and was ordering it to find plausible arguments to support her desire.

In an uncertain, qualified way she respected him, or rather she noticed the respect in which others held him. From her haphazard reading of novels, she had decided that there were three forms of distinction: wealth, social position, and artistic attainments. She had no idea of acquiring any of these distinctions by her own effort, that was a husband's job. She was a hard-headed young person; she discounted her mother's large projects. She did not really hope to get a millionaire or marry into the Four Hundred. Frank's artistic distinction was generally recognized. So he became a possibility.

She thought him a fool in money matters. The geniuses in her novels always were. But she told herself that with a little management this could be overcome. She saw no reason why painting should not be profitable. She had read of the great prices some portrait painters charged.

She had allowed herself to daydream, at times, of gilded young men from Newport, who owned polo ponies and yachts. But generally she kept her feet solidly on earth. It is only in the movies that the millionaire marries the penniless beauty. Frank had appeared eligible. And besides these cold calculations, it was a fact, a new fact in her life, that he had charmed her. In the long hours in the Studio he had, all unconsciously, cast a spell over her. He *was* lovable. So she had, as our grandmothers said, "set her cap for him."

But nothing which she had done, or might have done, to attract his attention had mattered. He had been entirely oblivious of her wiles. During the

months he had worked at her portrait, he had never thought of her as a human being — except with vexation, when she had come late, or had moved at critical moments. She had been for him a messenger from his goddess. It was not till the picture was finished and she was gone that he saw her. It was her absence that attracted his attention.

She was, of course, pleased, more pleased and excited than she had expected, when he came to tell her of his love, but she kept herself well in hand. In reply to his breathless entreaty to come with him to the Studio, never to leave him again she calmly asked what income he could offer her. Of course this question seemed irrelevant to him. But she made her position very clear. She said she loved him. It was not altogether untrue, only she did not know what love might be. If he loved her, he would want her to be happy. Her own life and her mother's had been made miserable by money worries, by her father's selfish refusal to make them comfortable. Frank could earn money if he wanted to. If he did not care enough for her to insure a decent income — as he so easily could — how could he expect her to trust herself and her children to his keeping? She would rather die a heartbroken old maid than have such a forlorn home life as her mother's had been.

All this, especially the reference to the imminence of children, put the marriage proposition before Frank much more concretely than it had appeared to him before. He had been thinking of a more complete, a more constant and intimate adoration. But now, seeing Lillian as never before, as something not to

paint but to caress, his blood took fire. Caution, foresight, even fidelity to the goddess he had worshiped so long took flight before the immemorial urge of generation.

Something new had crashed into his life. He wanted Lillian now, more than fame, more than the joy of the pictures he had dreamed of painting, more even than communion with his goddess. And — the age-old transformation trick was turned. Lillian seemed to him the Spirit of Beauty embodied, his very goddess incarnate. Their worship seemed identical. Her request was a new duty laid on him by his ancient cult.

One word of hers, "children," had been an incantation. He would have a child! Other people, of course, had children and it was a natural commonplace. But *his* child. He and Lillian together — it was a new and amazingly thrilling conception of creation. Writing poems, composing symphonies, painting, all this seemed suddenly pallid to him. He would have a child! Second thought might possibly have brought caution, if Lillian alone had been concerned. But with this magic word, she had him in thrall.

He asked her the minimum income on which she would marry him. Not realizing the strength of her witchery, fearing that he might balk, thinking her first demand would be only an opening wedge, she had said five thousand. He promised to arrange that. And then, triumphantly and joyously, she let him kiss her.

When he left her, he did not hesitate. He did not ask himself whether he were doing well or ill. It

was so evidently something he had to do. It had been decided when he pledged himself to a regular income. In a flash he had realized the impossibility of compromise. He could no more ask a wage of his goddess than he could accept pay for loving Lillian.

He went directly to Bruce Lyons and came away with the manuscript of his next "thriller." Of course he loathed the idea of illustrating it. But in the exaltation of those days it had seemed to him that Lillian's voice brought the commands of his goddess.

The first thing which had tempered his enthusiasm — the first suspicion which came to him of the existence of a fly in the ointment — was the difficulty of telling his friends. He loved Win as Jonathan had loved David, and he knew what Win thought of Lillian. The marriage would sadly interfere with their dear intimacy. From day to day he had delayed breaking the news, but at last it had to be told.

There had been a wild quarrel at home when Lillian had announced her engagement. Her mother did not want her to marry a mere artist. She had her mind set on a millionaire. And now — just when the portrait was finished, when within a few weeks her daughter's extraordinary beauty would be advertised in every Sunday newspaper in the country — seemed to her a peculiarly unfortunate time for her to throw herself away. But Father von Lehenburg had risen up wrathfully and exploded in German. "Remember what horrors happened to us because my father would not consent to our marriage. We will have none of that Old World tyranny here. Lillian will marry whoever she wants to."

Lillian had been somewhat shaken by her mother's opposition, but she had expected it and discounted it. She was a hard-headed young person, she did not share her mother's large dreams, she thought that Frank could easily earn a lot of money, and besides she did care for him. Perhaps half his charm for her lay in the fact that she did not understand him at all. She thought that it would be easy to manage him.

At first she had been happy with him. It was very wonderful to be so much adored. It was a long time before she began to take his attitude toward money seriously. It seemed so utterly foolish to her that she did not even try to understand it, it seemed so entirely iniquitous that it never occurred to her to compromise with it. With every bit as much energy as he brought to the task of trying to show her the higher values of life, she set to work to show him the error of his ways.

There were two things that made her the more bitter about it. She felt the unspoken disapproval of his friends; they all seemed to her in a conspiracy to support him in his stubborn resistance to common sense. How she wished that she could take him away from this part of town, from his old associates! The other thing was her mother's constant, jeering "I told you so." For the first year or two, she had been really better off than her mother and was not quite so open to this wounding sarcasm. But at last one of her father's inventions had caught on. Money was rolling in and the prosperity of her parents made her own situation seem all the more shabby. "If you had only trusted me," her mother would say, "if you

only hadn't been in such a hurry — well — nowadays we meet the right kind of people, you could have taken your pick." It was small wonder that Frank did not succeed in the task he had outlined to Eunice, that every day the situation in his home became more unbearable.

The thing that hurt him most was that it would have been so easy for hundreds of other men to have made her quite happy and sweet-tempered. She nagged, just as she had grown up hearing her mother nag, because what seemed to her simple and rational desires were thwarted by a man's ideals. Not understanding, she thought it unreasonable and ill-willed. Mrs. von Lehrenburg had never understood her husband's motives in refusing to sell his soul to the electric company. Mrs. Lockwood, her daughter, could not understand why Frank would not paint portraits of people who were willing to pay extravagantly.

Frank did not blame her. He had loved her enough to understand. It was not her fault. He had laid his soul at her feet, everything of virtue that he possessed. It was hard-luck — for both of them — that she did not care for his sacrifice, that the gifts he had brought her had not value in her eyes. The gods had made her so that she wanted lesser things.

He had gone through several phases in his relations to her. His first adoration of her beauty had been rudely shattered by the discovery of her most unlovely attitude toward life. He had recovered from the crash, and had rearranged his conception of her on the basis that she was very young and had been out-

fitted by her mother with a perverted philosophy. There had been two or three years of brave, tender, hopeful endeavor to show her higher values. With promising aptitude she had picked up his phraseology. But gradually the conviction had grown, had forced itself on him, that it was only the words she absorbed.

No one could have tried more earnestly than had he to make of marriage a noble thing. Most abjectly he had failed. In all the years they had lived together, he had not been able to narrow the chasm between them by an inch.

The conflict always centered on the five thousand dollars a year he had promised her. He could have earned more. But to what end? If he had brought her ten thousand, she would have teased for fifteen. And if, by turning himself into a machine, he had earned fifteen thousand, it would only have whetted her appetite for more. It was not that she had set her mind on any given sum. He might have arranged that. She thought he ought to earn as much as he could. That was her conception of a husband.

At length he had lost hope of changing her. Should he lower his standard? Every day things became more impossible between them. He had loved her utterly, he had wanted so earnestly to make her life with him a joyous thing. He could do it if only he would abandon a few ideals. As she said, it was only necessary for him to be "sensible."

But there was one thing, more than any other, which hardened his heart, which made it impossible for him to give in. She refused to have children on less than ten thousand a year. He wanted children

—immensely. He and Lillian, all his friends, except Win, had been raised in homes where five thousand a year would have seemed luxury. For her to set a money standard on such things, to use this as a bribe, typified all that was unlovely about her. He could not surrender to this. He could not buy children from her.

He managed to keep a cheery smile on his lips as he went about his daily round. He was generally supposed to be very much in love with his beautiful wife — and happy. Even Win, his best friend, who hated Lillian, did not suspect the depth of his despair.

Deep in his subconsciousness there was always an argument in process. The Puritan strain of his "down in Maine" ancestors made him try to suppress it. But the argument went on just the same. "Are you really married," a little voice repeated monotonously, "in any way that counts? It takes two to make a marriage. If it isn't mutual, it isn't anything. You have given so much. What has she given?"

A pain would clutch his heart at the bare memory of what he had given up. He tried his bravest to repulse the thought. But now and then the wail of Oscar Wilde — his favorite poet — echoed within him.

"Surely there was a time I might have trod
The Sunlit heights and from Life's dissonance
Struck one clear chord to reach the ears of God."

With never a quiver nor hesitation he had given up his "soul's inheritance." He had laid it loyally at her feet. "And what," the small voice of his sub-

consciousness would ask, "has she given? Nothing! Nothing! But it's you she accuses of selfishness."

"You ought to realize what I've given up, Frank," she would often say. "I wouldn't complain if you were doing the best you could, if you were trying to make the most of yourself — but you don't even try. I'd be entirely loyal to you, no matter what bad luck you had if you were trying, but you don't try. We might just as well have a motor car. It wouldn't take you two weeks to illustrate that book for Mr. Lawrence. It's sure to be a best seller. You could get a lot of society portraits if you tried. But you won't. And you won't even let father give me a car. You say we can't afford a chauffeur! It's the dog-in-the-manger attitude I complain of."

"This isn't marriage at all," the little voice would say.

Lane appeared to Frank as an amazingly happy man. Somehow he had never been caught by the tyranny of "the accepted things." The little voice urged him to greater intimacy. "There's a free man," it said. "If he wasn't really married to a woman, not all the Popes and judges in the world could bluff him into thinking he was."

This night, when he left Lillian — left her so sadly — he could not sleep. Lane's talk echoed within him. Not so much his words as their meanings. It was as though a clear voice had called to an imprisoned one: "Your chains are make-believe. The manacles which torture you are shams. Laugh at them and they will crumble."

He shook up the fire in the old-fashioned grate,

and, lighting his pipe, settled down to analyze his situation. When things have gone wrong, we think it would be a comfort to know how we are to blame, where we committed the fatal mistake. Pain always seems a punishment — at least to us of the West, who believe in free will and individual responsibility.

There can be no doubt that a devout Muslim suffers less from a toothache than we. He finds an opiate comfort in the belief that it was "Written in the Book," that each pang was decreed by Allah before the world was. We find vexation of spirit and increased misery in the conviction that it is a retribution for some sin. We have eaten too many sweets. We neglected to clean our teeth regularly, or we have failed to go to the dentist with sensible frequency.

The fatalism with which the East calms its pains is no more fantastic than the bumptious belief in free will with which we excite and multiply our hurts.

Of only one thing he was sure, it was not Lillian's fault. There were very few men in New York who thought more tenderly of their wives, who blamed their women less for the misery at home, the hidden misery, which may not be shown. There was nothing bad about Lillian, only she did not understand.

His life was a torture. He was utterly unhappy. Lillian was not to blame, it must be his fault. Wherein lay his sin? Lillian accused him of selfishness. But he could hardly admit this charge. He indulged only one luxury. He kept a fishing dory, which he had brought up from Maine, in a modest boat club in Huntington Harbor. Sometimes he escaped to it,

when he was too sore for human intercourse. Alone, his hands employed in the dear sea craft he had learned as a boy, alone with his first playmates, the wind and the waves, he sometimes caught fleeting glimpses of his goddess again and was comforted.

He thought back to the day when he had boxed up Lillian's portrait and had felt such appalling loneliness. That had been the crucial moment of his life. Should he have checked himself, denied the human heart, the longing and passion within him? Would he have done so, even if he could have foreseen all that it would mean? No, he could not convince himself that it had been wrong for him to love Lillian. It had seemed to him so manifestly the bidding of his goddess.

He would have understood his sin if he had let the flesh enslave him, but it was not that. There were still occasional flames of passion in his love for Lillian. It had not completely burned out even after all these sad years. But that was not what held him.

He tried, sitting there before the fire which was burning low, desperately hard to be just to himself. He could not find his fault. He could not see his duty clear.

He had for his own talents, gifts the goddess had bestowed, the awe and reverence that were their due. He could not think lightly of them. All were going to waste.

If, over and above her beauty, there had been understanding — love — how gladly he would have left his songs unsung! Neither love nor work. All was

wasted. He was very sure this was an unforgivable sin. But he could see no escape.

He felt himself tangled helplessly in an intangible snare. Society, which cared not at all for his individual soul, nor for the fair flowers and rich fruit it might have borne, smothered him in its insistence on outward forms and accepted attitudes.

He was at that time illustrating "Gulliver's Travels." He wondered if there were other worlds where men were very much bigger — or smaller — than the men he knew. Perhaps in Mars or some more distant star there were beings who would value his gifts, who would judge him, as silently in his inmost heart as he judged himself. Men who would say it was a shameful thing for one who might sing songs to support a wife.

There was no doubt what the society of New York City, or even of what his friends, thought about it. They expected him to support his wife. If they knew the insides of the situation they would, reluctantly, perhaps, but nevertheless surely, take Lillian's side. They would say — "It's too bad you're not happy — but you made your own bed." They'd tell him "to stick." Yes, once you are married, the convention is explicit.

As Mr. Wells has pointed out again and again in his novels, man is an imperfectly domesticated animal. We have only a pitiful few thousand years to accustom ourselves to living in unison and we are still far from expert at it.

It is surprising that the fabric of society holds together as well as it does. Why do so many people

accept the conventions? It is hard to discover a single member of our ponderous family who does not sacrifice some personal treasure to the Spirit of the Hive. This one is checked on the threshold of some glorious adventure by considerations of Good Form. That one folds away a great aspiration in order to pay off the mortgage on the family estate, to liquidate a debt left by a former generation. And the Moral Law, that strange, incoherent, nine-lived structure, which has been so often demolished in argument, still survives and holds so many, many people back from their hearts' desire.

The conventions! Almost all philosophers have agreed to call them lies. But no sane person can deny their force. You can analyze every one of them into nothingness but you cannot explain away the indignation of society, when they are violated, nor the penalties inflicted.

Sooner or later almost every one comes to clutches with the problem: Shall I, the living, pulsing, yearning individual, sacrifice the dearest child of my soul to this Moloch of conventional lies? It is easy to argue, as does Mr. Wells — and his arguments are weighty — that it is expedient for the individual to make concessions to the community ideal, to strike a compromise with society. It is easy to argue thus when the problem is abstract. But as soon as it becomes concrete, it is just as easy to argue — and with just as much weight — that the thing desired and forbidden is real, that it has a near, personal value, while the benefits of conformity are problematic and very remote.

It is at first sight surprising that in so great a majority of cases the conventions win. But the reason is not far to seek. The average vitality of the race is very low, scantily sufficient to maintain and hand on the feeble flame of life. Few of us have energy to desire passionately any of the luxuries of the soul. We are not content with bare existence, but there is a vast gulf between vague discontent and passionate desire. Very few of us want anything intensely enough to risk our skins to get it.

Frank, slunk down deep in his armchair before the dying embers of his fire, pondering deeply on the cause and meaning of his miserable entanglement, saw the scroll of life unroll before the eyes of his spirit as though it were a dreamy parable.

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Life seemed to him a hurrying, fatiguing journey. Our ancestors have erected signposts along the way, signposts and high fences. It is not a straight nor a very commodious road which they have bequeathed us. They were not trained engineers. But at least it is practicable. Great throngs hurry along and few have breath to do more than keep the pace.

But the youngsters, in the plenitude of their strength, which was given them for their entire journey, hasten ahead at times and so gain resting moments when they can look beyond the narrow confines of the path. They talk among themselves of the things their eyes have seen, and always young eyes see wondrous things.

The country on either side looks fairer to them;

at least, it has not been beaten into lifelessness by the myriad hurrying feet.

"How much more beautiful," some say, "our journey would be if our road followed the crest of the mountain range! How much purer the air up yonder! How much broader the outlook!"

And others of a more practical turn remark that the road is most crooked.

"It would be much shorter if we left it and went straight to our journey's end."

And some say:

"Yesterday we heard the pipes of Pan, and on a distant rock we saw the great god with his nymphs. They stopped their dance to beckon us. And — oh! — we were fain to go. But the old folk held us back — told us they were most dreadful sirens."

"Back in the wilds," others say, "we could be free — we would not be bothered by the rules of the road."

"At least it would be more exciting in the jungle," they all agree — these youngsters as they talk among themselves — "Life there would have more thrills. It is stupid to follow this antiquated trail."

Some there always are who light-minded leave the path, the safe path of the old folk. They do not foresee the hardship of the trackless jungle, nor take stock of their own strength. They make no preparation. They have not even a clear idea of where they wish to go. Rashly, childishly, they clamber over the fences which were built with so great care. And one is almost certain to die in the jungle. The dangers are manifold.

These light-headed ones soon lose their gay reck-

lessness. They are frightened by strange beasts, they fall into dismal swamps. The shriek of their agony is often heard on the road, the safe road of the fathers. The old folk shake their heads wisely at the piteous sound and point the moral to the young: "That is the wailing of the outcasts."

Of course it is a lie. Those who perish in the jungle were not cast out. They went voluntarily, in spite of strenuous efforts to keep them in. But the people of the path prefer to call them "outcasts."

Some of the youngsters trudge on with their elders for months and years. They listen attentively to the noises of the jungle. They learn what they may from the camp fire stories of fellow travelers, they attend respectfully to the lectures of the old folk. But ever the thought of the purer air, the broader vision of the hilltops, of the straighter, shorter road, of the haunting beauty of the sylvan pipes, burns within them. At last, having collected a little bundle of provisions, a weapon or two, a compass — or perhaps relying solely on the guidance of the stars — they, too, leave the beaten path to struggle for a definite goal.

Very many of them, also, are lost. But even if they fall into the fangs of the great serpent, they do not wail. If Death comes to them, he finds them silent and unafraid. A few win through.

Far in advance they strike the road again. They are torn and bleeding from the thorns of the jungle, emaciated with hunger, disfigured with wounds. They have blazed, for all who come after, a shorter, better trail, and are greeted as heroes by the dusty

people of the path. But those who hail them, never realize the hardships they have outfaced, the pains they have borne. Even less do they conceive the inexpressible joys of the jungle; the thrill of freedom and adventure, the clear, pure air, the caresses of the nymphs. These things are inexpressible, because the pale language of the road holds no words for such vibrant things.

This is the great tragedy, the unanticipated pain of the explorers, the forthfarers, the shorteners of paths. They can never tell of their experiences. Even the solitude of the jungle is not so empty as the loneliness amid the crowd on the road who cannot understand.

The weak people get to their journey's end by carefully following the ancient signposts —, their skins intact. Perhaps they, too, have heard the distant pipes of Pan, have caught glimpses, which linger in their dreams, of the white, alluring bodies of dryads dancing; they also, perhaps, have longed for the pure air of the mountaintops, have thrilled timidly at stories of derring do, have wished the path were straighter. But their desire for these things has been pallid indeed beside their vivid fears.

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No one who has watched the process of life closely can disagree with the ancient law, the hoary maxim, which says: "If you don't know what you want — do what your mother tells you." Few people know what they want, fewer have the energy to be more than peevish when, in the interests of the hive, their desires are denied.

The conventions have nothing to do with ethics. They are a matter of expediency. It is useless to call them lies. They are the signposts along the easiest way. Pale-blooded people should follow them religiously.

The average anæmic person can have no conception of the black hatred toward the conventional attitudes which had grown up in Frank's heart. He had given a glorious birthright for a very inferior mess of pottage. The conventions commanded him to stand by this infamous contract.

He wondered how Lane would judge him. What would this Stranger from a remote civilization think of this contract he was expected to keep? He would have liked to submit the case to him. But he was oppressed by the knowledge that it was not "the thing" to do so. He would be thought a cad, if it were known that he had discussed his wife with an outsider. The home relation is the last matter of which it is permitted to talk frankly.

This fact was the bitterest element in his misery. He was expected to ignore it. He was expected "to grin and bear it" in silence. Win, who knew him so well, must know that things were not going right. Never once had Win even remotely suggested that his home life was anything but beatific. Win, his best friend, would be horrified if he confided his soul's distress.

The desire to have an outside judgment on his predicament was keen. He would like to talk it all out with this Stranger. The little voice within him kept repeating "Why not?" Twice he rehearsed to him-

self how he would put his case, if he were presenting it to Lane. But at last he went to bed — still with no idea that he ever would find the courage to say such things to a stranger.

CHAPTER XVI

EUNICE AND THE GARDEN

Eunice would have known that the Stranger loved her, as he felt she must know, if she had looked things in the face. But this, of course, she did not do.

Her love for him had flamed so dazzlingly in her heart that it could not be ignored. But as soon as might be, as soon as she had time to think, she strove to suppress this emotion. It was foolish for a woman so sick to dream of love. She might as well have desired the moon for a jewel. So, as all her people had done for generations, as all her associates from childhood had done, as every tendency in the life about her taught her to do, she tried to forget this disturbing thing — to pretend it did not exist.

When, the morning after he had dined with her, she opened the package of photographs and read the careful notes he had written, she was still somewhat lethargic from the drug, her nerves were still numb from the unaccustomed turmoil of the yesterday. When the body is fatigued, it is easy to be rational. So she read the Service for the Dead in her heart and built a tombstone over her love.

Of course he had written, instead of coming in person with the pictures. Why should he come again? He had seen her face to face. He had reached a just estimate of her small worth. Proba-

bly Pete and Win, when they had gone off with him, had told him of her unfitness. They would have spoken kindly, of course, they were always kind to her. After all, it was best for him to know. Besides he had seen her work. He knew the ineffectualness of her life. Pictures for children! He had been wonderfully courteous to her about it, pretending to be interested. But he would not come again.

So the day passed, a barren day, which saw no work accomplished. Helen had a committee meeting that evening and, before she came home, Eunice, unable to bear her desolate loneliness, had taken the drops again.

It was three days before she picked up again the slender thread which was her life. And then she smiled sardonically at herself. What a hullabaloo she had kicked up over nothing at all! Of course Lane was interested in her, just as he was interested in every other individual in the mass he liked to study. He was interested in Chinese laundrymen and Jamaican Jenny. She was to him a curio — an unveiled woman. Perhaps, also, there was some peculiar intonation in her speech to interest him.

Such interest was not exactly complimentary, but she could pay him back in his own coin. She had an interest in him. He could help her with her foolish picture of Tit, Tat Toe and Little Top in Marakesh, and that was good for five hundred dollars from *The Children's World*, besides the share in the book proceeds. She doubted if he could get an equal value out of studying her accent. And so, feeling just as commercial about it as she could contrive, she wrote

him a formal note asking him to come and help her with the picture.

It reached him in the early morning mail. He had hardly left his room all those three days. He had been making "keef" — waiting for the summons. He telephoned at once that he would come. He waited only long enough to be sure that Helen would have left for her office.

He hardly recognized Eunice. She was so formal, so businesslike!

Somehow a cloud had blown across the face of love. What caused the chill he could not guess. He could only hope that it would pass, meanwhile he would be of service.

Sickness is a wonderful discipline for the will and Eunice had her teeth set in determination. So for an hour or more they occupied themselves with the rough draft of her picture. But even Eunice's interest was perfunctory. Now and then he would look up at her face questioningly. And, feeling this glance of his, she would forget the point of the question she had just asked.

"I wish you could understand Arabic," he said at last, after a barren pause. "In English I do not know how to talk of love."

A dumb sound broke from Eunice's lips. It was something very near a sob, but not quite. Cruelly, in a flash, she realized that all the time they had been together this morning, for days and nights before, ever since the Thanksgiving fête, she had hoped that this would come. But she had not allowed herself to understand what she was hoping.

She was utterly, horribly ashamed. It was the confusion which most of us have felt now and then, when, abruptly, some reasonless wish, some hidden emotion which we have striven to forbid and suppress, has won to dominance. "The stone which the builder rejected!" The old biblical parable is reenacted in our own life. The desires we prided ourselves on ignoring have overthrown what we fondly called our "better selves."

We would like to think of ourselves as clear-cut individuals, as units, but ever and again we find ourselves fragmentary — divided. Civil war, treason, breaks out in our inmost citadel. All that is conscious and reasonable about us has ordained a certain action, a certain attitude, and just as our course looks surest before us, the little senseless word slips out. The telltale, betraying gesture suddenly overthrows our careful artifice. The subconscious, which we have despised and ignored, has triumphed. The fat's in the fire.

The reason of Eunice's shame was the realization that all the time, in spite of the overwhelming arguments against it, in spite of her conviction that it would be senseless and sinful, she had wanted Lane to love her. She had no right to love, less to be loved. According to all her standards of honor and human decency she ought not to have allowed this to happen. So self-evident had all this been to her, that she had thought herself sincere as her heart had chanted the Service for the Dead over her love. And now, in a blaze, she knew that she had not been sincere. Even

as she had lit the funeral candles before the tombstone in her heart, she had hoped!

Worse! She had schemed for it. She had not been loyal to herself — less to him. It had not been for help on her picture that she had sent for him. She saw the trick of it now. Oh, the plausible sound her false argument of commerce had had! It was ignominy to realize that she had deceived herself with the pretence that five hundred dollars had had anything to do with her asking him to come! Twice that morning, after he had telephoned that he would come, she had gone to the mirror to rearrange her hair. These little coquetries pointed scornful, accusing fingers at her.

Of course Lane did not know what it was which had chased all the faint color from her cheeks and brought the uncontrolled, spasmodic quiver to her lips, nor, why in breathless silence, she bowed her head down to her drawing board and hid her face. He could have talked to her in Arabic. The English words came hard.

“Are you ill?”

If these subconscious desires had been dominating Eunice it was only because they were hidden. Once she saw them clearly and understood herself, she knew what she ought to do and courageously she attempted it.

“No, no more than usual,” she said, facing him bravely. “But you must not talk love to me.”

“You do not want me to love you?”

“No,” she said quickly, believing for the moment

that her reason was herself and that she was speaking true.

But his look disconcerted her. The habits of thought on which her reason was built held no truth for him in this crisis. And she did not want to lie.

"That's not the point," she tried again. "You mustn't love me. I haven't any right to love. I'm ashamed — that I let you love me."

"Ashamed — of love?"

There was a blank bewilderment in his voice, much distress, and a shade of reproach.

"Ashamed of love?"

She looked away. How could she answer? Ashamed? Yes. A part of her was. But all the rest of her was singing pæans. The blood in her veins — the thin blood — was dancing in joyous pride, even as King David danced before the Ark of the Covenant.

"No right to love? Are you promised to another?"

Again she could find no words, but her whole shuddering attitude answered "No."

"No right to love?" he repeated drearily.

He was sadly lost. No whit did he understand. He knew she loved him, but his love was painful to her. How could it be? A possible — a fantastic but possible — explanation flashed into his mind.

"Perhaps — I have read of such things — perhaps you are a nun? A bride of Christ?"

"Oh, no! No!" she stammered, still struggling desperately against all of her being, which was not

that little tangle of nerve cells, that square inch of gray matter, with which we reason. "No, no. Can't you understand? I love you. But you mustn't love me. I'm sick. I'm not promised to any one. No! I'm not the bride of any one — but Death!"

He did not understand, not much of what she said. But he understood what to do. He took her hands and kissed them and, as she turned her face away, he kissed her neck. At that, all her valiant resistance fell away. She clung to him and sobbed. He picked her up lightly — so very lightly — and carried her to the couch. While she lay that moment unresisting in his arms, he realized for the first time how very little there was left of her this side of the grave. He laid her down tenderly and stroked her hands and sang to her, under his breath, a plaintive Shilah love song. He could not find English words.

Presently her sobs were quieted under his ministrations. She opened her eyes, reached out her hand, and touched his cheek as if amazed.

"And so, Beloved," she asked, "you love me?"

"We three be one."

And all the tears she had ever shed were dried up and forgotten.

"The innermost, innermost door is open, Beloved," she whispered, "to welcome Love."

And then he realized that the trouble with his tongue was not the unaccustomed language. Not even in Arabic could he have found words to express what was in his heart.

In a way Love found him unprepared. To be sure, he was unashamed. There were no resistances in his

habit of thought to overcome. But he was less able to express its wonder than was Eunice. All his life long Love had been for him only an ideal. It was the Spirit of Poesy. It was the Music of the Stars. It was the Mystic Way, the path that leads to life's highest mountain peaks. It was the Burning Bush. The Very Voice of God. He could have discoursed with endless eloquence about Love, but he could only stammer about *his* love.

For a while he sat beside her on the edge of the couch, silent. Then, lighting a cigarette, he began to tell her about his little whitewashed house in the Glawi. It was in the hills, three days by muleback from Marakesh. It sat on the edge of a cliff, that broke down a thousand feet to a broad fair valley, and beyond were the Great Atlas, which support high heaven. Half the horizon from his flat roof was eternal snow. He told her of the oranges that grew in his garden, of the olives and almond trees and the date palms and of the ineffable splendor of the moon when she rose above Jibel Kebir and shone on all the white-capped mountains round about and how even the mystic sheen of the moon was a lesser glory than the Light of Love.

"How do you say 'Beloved' in your language?" she asked.

"I would not have known it was beautiful," she said when he had taught her the word, "if I did not know it meant you."

"Us," he corrected her.

He started once more to tell of his mountains, but the spell was broken.

"It would be wonderful, Beloved," she interrupted, "but I will never live to go so far with you."

"The doctors may be wrong."

"It is not that the doctors have told me. I know."

He did not contradict her — nor argue.

"You are not afraid to die."

There was not the shadow of a question in his voice.

"No. So very many, many times I've wished that it would come quickly. But now"—once more tears glistened in her eyes, but they did not have the glitter of bitterness. "Oh — now, Beloved, I would like to live."

He raised her hand devoutly to his lips and kissed its palm.

"Why must we have sickness and death?" she asked. "How does your religion explain that?"

"'If the seed did not die'"—he quoted—"there would be no plant."

"'If the flower did not fade there would be no fruit.' It is the will of Allah, who is compassionate and merciful."

"No," she broke out, in very Western revolt. "He is not merciful to us, to me — to you. It is so wonderful to love — and for us it is all waste — like a little child who is born dead. It is not merciful."

"No? Has not the mercy of Love come to us — to me in my solitude, to you in your sickness? Some people live and die who have never known Love. I think they must be very lonely in their graves. *El*

hamdu-l-illah! That was not written in the Book for us! Allah has shown us His mercy."

For a moment she was silenced, and then, intent on stirring him out of his resignation, she sat up.

"No, not to us. To me? Yes! You are right. I will not be lonely in my grave"—once more she reached out her hand in that amazed gesture and touched his cheek—"I used to fear the solitude of death, but I will not be lonely—any more! But for you, Beloved, it is not merciful. No! You asked me why I was ashamed. Why? You have a right to love—to life. And I—I, who am half dead, haven't any such right. I ought not to have let you love me—you nor any one. If I'd been brave and worthy I would not have let you come to see me so often, I would not have sent for you to-day. But, oh!—I wanted you so much and I was weak. How could I not be ashamed? It is a horrid sin for me to let myself be loved."

"How can love be a sin? How else can we be like God—whose name is love?"

"Oh! But love should bear fruit. You should have—you have a right to have—a wife to bear you children. Yes, you should have children. Such dear little children they would be—your children! But it would be criminal for me to hand down to another generation the sickness of this body of mine—which I inherited from my parents. At least they were ignorant of their sin. But I know. I—"

"I am very grateful," he broke in, "to your parents for what you call their 'sin.' It is in this that the

Compassion and Mercy of Allah is most manifest to me — that you were born — Oh,” he cried, jumping up and pacing the room in torment, “I cannot stand the cruelty of your Western life.

“Health! It is only a word. An empty, abstract word. There is no virtue in health. Stones are not sick. Pigs have health. The black boy who runs the elevator is healthy! Is he an ideal man? Should we strive to be like him? Even your own Bible says ‘unless a grain of wheat falleth into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone, but if it die, it beareth much fruit.’

“Health! It is like ‘Efficiency.’ Some people say the Americans worship the almighty dollar. No! You worship words!

“Health! what is it? Even your doctors can’t define it. And you call us superstitious! You with your charms and magic formulæ and puny drugs! Of all your word gods, health is the greatest! You no longer build temples to Jehovah, you erect hospitals to health! You no longer fear the devil, you cower before sickness. You are more afraid of pain than of sin! No mediæval superstition, no fetish worship of the native blacks was ever more abject!

“Lancaster says you are no longer priest-ridden, you grovel before your doctors of medicine. Did any indulgence-selling priests ever get fatter off credulity than your modern quacks? They offer you long life — instead of eternal life. That’s your famous progress!

“In olden days, parents used to give their children to Moloch to save their souls. You — modern people

—sacrifice your souls to keep your bodies alive! It is hideous!

“In the same year when you were born, millions of children were born. But out of them all, God chose you to be His messenger to me. What do I care about those healthy babies?

“If I were not a man, if I were a stallion — if all I wanted were healthy, soulless children — as they breed horses — oh, there are hundreds of women I could find. There is Miss Cash, for instance. She seems to be healthy, and a healthy mind, too. What is that Latin phrase — a healthy mind in a healthy body? She must have some soul, because she is your friend — but I have not seen it. If I had to choose between daughters like her, who would live a thousand years and daughters like you — do you think I would hesitate? You are my Beloved.”

He came and knelt beside her and kissed her. The storm had blown itself out.

“I cannot understand how you people live, and so I am made angry,” he said, apologetically. “I would go mad if I lived here long. It seems inexpressibly cruel — heartless — soulless! You people think of love as something to found a family on, and we — my people — think of love as a step in the ladder up to God.

“Beloved, we cannot know what Allah has written in the Book. But in His mercy, He has granted us this morning together. It is worth all the rest. Let us give ourselves to love as long as may be.”

He put his arm about her and drew her cheek to his and a very luminous silence fell on them.

A few minutes after noon a latchkey grated in the door and Helen's cheery voice gave Eunice a hail down the hall. They had scant time to arrange their spirits for this shock of reality. Even in lesser moments, Helen was disconcerting to Lane. It was a relief that Eunice whispered "go."

"Oh, Mr. Lane," Helen said, in a voice which seemed boisterous to the two, who, till her interruption, had been immersed in mystery. "Glad to see you! You'll stay to lunch with us, of course. Jenny, lay another plate for Mr. Lane."

"I am sorry," he said. "I have an engagement. I am late already. I must hurry."

"Sorry," she said, as she walked with him to the door. "I'm never at home in the morning — have to be in my office. Come in for tea some afternoon — soon. I'm keen for an argument about 'Efficiency.'"

"I like him," she said, as she came back to the room, where Eunice was still stretched out on the couch. "But he is a bit stupid. I'm sure I told him I'm never at home in the mornings. Come along. It's time for lunch."

Eunice was reluctant to leave the couch, where he had laid her, where he had kissed her, where Love had crowned her. She would have liked to lie there motionless till Death called her.

Helen had to summon her to lunch a second time.

Helen did most of the talking; chatting about her work, their friends, and frequently referring to Lane.

All the pride which had been in Eunice shriveled up. She knew that Helen would consider this affair shameful — even as her own reason had told her from

the first that she ought to consider it. The fact that it was so hard to tell her dearest friend about this great event made it seem unworthy. And even more shameful it seemed, a treachery to her Beloved, not to tell.

At last she could bear it no longer. Helen spoke again as if it were a misunderstanding of her regular hours which had led him to call in the morning.

"Oh, he knew," Eunice said painfully. "He came to see me."

Helen looked up at her sharply.

"Oh, yes. About that Moorish picture. How's it going?"

"We talked about that — a little — at first ——"

The words would not come. But she wanted Helen to know. She was glad to feel the color flaming in her cheeks.

"You don't mean ——"

"Yes. He wants me to go with him — to his own country."

"But it's impossible!"

"Yes. Nell, dear, of course, it's impossible. But, oh, I can't talk about it now. I must think."

She got up unsteadily, stood for a moment over her unfinished lunch, looking into the face of her friend. Then she shivered and turned hurriedly to her room.

Helen's incredulous expression showed her only too clearly what the verdict of all rational people would be.

Helen was utterly dumfounded by Eunice's confession. The first rush of feeling was that the affair was unspeakably ghastly. It reminded her of a

hideous poem of Swinburne's about a mediæval clerk and his love for a noble lady who had been smitten by the pest. It quite spoiled her appetite. The coffee she sipped was not half so black as her thoughts. She hurried out, to walk uptown to her office, hoping that exercise would clear her mind.

Lane had taken refuge in a cigar store on the corner. He waited impatiently until he saw Helen leave the house, then he rushed to the telephone.

"Yes," he said, as soon as he caught Eunice's voice. "She's gone. I'm coming back — right away ——"

"No. Please. You must not come again to-day. To-morrow — perhaps. It's all so new. I must be alone a while to think. I'll let you know when to come. You must pray to your God, Beloved — and I will pray to all of mine."

CHAPTER XVII

HELEN DOES HER DUTY

What really troubled Helen most, although she was far from realizing it, was the wound to her *amour propre*. There is nothing in life more painful. Nothing, which can happen to our bodies — having a nerve extracted from a tooth or being crushed beneath some Juggernaut — is such anguish, is so utterly disconcerting as to have that little foundation of self-conceit, in which we base our lives, knocked to pieces. This was what it meant to Helen to discover that the Stranger, Lane, preferred Eunice!

Helen's reason, of which she was so proud, was a frail little bark, riding just as insecurely on the tumultuous, treacherous waves of the ocean of subconsciousness as Eunice's had been — as yours and mine are. Helen did not, could not, understand what was happening to her. She was quite sincere in believing that the outrage she felt came solely from the shocking disregard for the reasonable demands of eugenics, which this love affair betrayed.

A complicated muddle of circumstances, over which she had no control, all of which she ignored, had been conspiring for her overthrow.

It is the fashion nowadays to begin with biology. Helen was a magnificent animal. She had hardly known a sick day in her life. She came from a

healthy, vital, reproducing stock. She was past thirty. The most delicate part of her physical organism, the part most intimately connected with her nervous system, a part nearly concerned with all spiritual values, was, in a voiceless but efficient way, protesting against disuse. Her children were ten years overdue.

Sentimentally, also, she was passing through a crisis. Her long, tender intimacy with Pete had satisfied the minimum demands of her emotions. Now, that he had turned away, she felt distressingly isolated. Eunice did a great deal to fill the blank space in her heart. But every one who knew Eunice felt poignantly that she was not here for long. With increasing frequency Helen had to fight against a mood of lassitude. For the first time in her life, she occasionally found the work on her desk dropping out of focus, and the eyes of her spirit peering forth at a singularly void and barren future.

Besides, she had come to a point where her work no longer offered much novelty. She was no longer the ardent, intensely interested youngster who had refused marriage in the abstract when Pete had made his concrete proposals. The struggle for recognition was over. She had made her mark, had built for herself a place in the world. And when the thrill of building is over our spirits droop a little. "Moving in" is always something of a disillusion. Even as Alexander wept when there were no more worlds left to conquer, so a woman sighs when the last room of the longed-for abode is furnished, when the last picture is hung. If Helen was ever going to com-

bine her professional success, which had lost its first thrill, with matrimony, now was manifestly the accepted time.

At this juncture the Stranger had appeared.

It would be impossible to say at what point, or to what extent, Helen had fallen in love with him. "Falling in love" is so distressingly vague a term. Certainly she had not admitted to herself any such fall. She did not even realize that she had stumbled.

At first he had seemed "queer" to her, so much in need of "a keeper"—there were so many obvious corrections to make. She loved "setting things right." That antiquated collar of his had typified a great deal. Then, she had realized that he was a good deal more than an amusing freak. She had been impressed by the real liking which Win and Frank and Pete had shown for him. She took little stock in "ladies' men." A man whom men liked was worth attention. But it was not till he had spoiled her speech on efficiency that he had really taken hold of her imagination.

There is an Oriental tale he might have told her of a Mongol princess, a barbarian Amazon, who challenged all her suitors to a wrestling bout. Their heads were forfeit, if she defeated them. Of course, a Prince of India arrives at last who succeeds in throwing her. They marry and live happily ever after. In a match of wits, Lane had tripped her easily and had sprawled her flat on her back.

She knew that her brains were better than most men's. There was no false conceit in this. It was quite true. Time and again, on one committee or an-

other, she had advocated some course of action, had been voted down — by men — and then proved right by the event. Being so often right, she had grown a bit cocksure and dogmatic. It was an entirely unusual experience for her to be upset and confused by a few chance words — as had resulted from her talk with Lane about efficiency. Here was a man on whom she could not impose her dictums.

More and more her few idle minutes had been filled with planning how to overcome the first bad impression which she knew she had made on him. And the more she thought about this, the more necessary it seemed to succeed. This was the crux of the whole matter. She was used to admiration, and this Stranger did not admire. It was a challenge. It was supremely necessary to cure him of thinking that she was only a glib talker. She had not doubted that she could accomplish this.

Now, in spite of her being thus amiably disposed, he had calmly preferred Eunice!

Not having analyzed her situation, not really understanding what she felt about it, nor why, she was inexpressibly shocked. Of course marriage between them was impossible. Eunice ought not to have allowed things to come to this pass. Even in this matter of mating, Helen believed that this is a reasonable world, that we are the captains of our souls. She could not recall any time when she had not been able to act as a reasonable being. Eunice ought not to have permitted herself to love Lane — much less to have allowed him to become involved.

As she walked uptown, Eunice's responsibility

in the matter was what distressed her most. It was certainly unreasonable of her — sick, probably on the edge of the grave, certainly unfit for motherhood — to have let a man propose to her.

But in all her intercourse with Eunice she had never known her to act unworthily. There was a possibility that she did not realize how desperate was her condition. Dr. Riggs had said he had not told her. Helen clutched at this possibility. Partly because it was plausible, more because she did not want to believe that Eunice, knowing the truth, had hidden it. No, she was altogether too fine a person to be capable of tricking him. Evidently she did not know.

The corollary was obvious. Lane ought to be told. She could not speak to Eunice about it, the doctor's orders were explicit. But Lane had a right to know. Plainly it was her duty to tell him.

So when she got to her office she wrote a note.

"My dear Mr. Lane:

"I'm sorry you could not stay to lunch with us to-day. I very much want to have a good talk with you. You don't know how much you upset me with your criticism of my gospel of efficiency. It's only fair for you to give me a chance to argue it out.

"I'm horribly rushed these days, but I happen to be free to-night. If this note finds you before five, call me up at my office (Stuyvesant 7009) and let me know if we can have dinner together. You might take me to the Turkish restaurant you spoke of. I'd like some more of that Oriental cooking. I do hope you'll be free.

"Cordially,

"HELEN CASH."

She sent it by messenger boy to his rooms. It arrived an hour after he had returned from his fruitless

telephone conversation with Eunice. At first he had tried to settle down to thought, but it was impossible. Those moments with his Beloved had set all his nerves on fire. Music was necessary to him and he had taken down from his mantelpiece the strange instrument whose name Win could not pronounce. It calmed him somewhat to busy his hands with the playing. And presently a great longing came over him to share with Eunice the comfort which one of the songs he hummed brought to him. Again he wished that she knew Arabic. He put aside the *r'bab* and set to work translating the verses. He was just finishing a rough version, when Helen's note of invitation arrived.

His first impulse was to refuse. He wondered if Eunice had told Helen. It would be a hard matter to discuss with her. But he had been long enough in his room to realize keenly the emptiness of the evening before him — and perhaps she would talk of Eunice. So he called her up and said he would be charmed.

"If you care to," she replied, "come early — about five — and I'll show you how we've organized charity in New York."

A few minutes before the hour, he knocked at her office door.

"Hello," she greeted him. "Just a second — till I finish up. Sit down. You can smoke."

Until the clock struck five, she was busy signing letters and giving instructions to her assistants.

"There," she said, swinging round in her pivot

chair as the Metropolitan clock finished its chime. "To-day's little job finished. I'm awfully glad you could come. I want to show you what I mean by efficiency."

The sight of him had disconcerted her somewhat. She was glad that there was this long-standing topic of discussion to fall back on. She did not want to jump directly into her main business.

She proceeded to give him a little lecture on the organization of alms. In former unenlightened days sham beggars had defrauded gullible people; the deserving poor, in real need, got no adequate help. Charity had been a haphazard chaos. But gradually, in accordance with the spirit of the times, all this work of relieving distress was being put on a sound, businesslike basis of efficiency. She told him about the various card catalogues. She explained the functions of the friendly visitors and the school in which these professional almoners are trained. She went through the list of the various societies, which had offices in the building, and told how they were being coördinated, so that all the ground would be covered and no one would poach on the special preserves of another. She told how in recent years a new category of associations had been growing up with the object, not of relieving, but of preventing misery.

Then she told of her own work. She was trying to organize — to efficiency-ize — charity at its source. She was working out practical, almost scientific, methods to fund alms, methods to persuade those who gave little to give more, those who gave nothing to give something. In five different charities, one after

another, by introducing efficiency in soliciting support, she had more than doubled their income.

"These methods are being applied elsewhere. A young man I have trained has just started to work for the Association for the Aid of Tubercular Children. He will raise two or three times more for these poor little cripples than has ever been done before. Have you any objection to make to such efficiency?"

"No," he said, "of course not. It is wonderful."

"Well, it's what I mean by the gospel of efficiency. It's doing things right — getting away from slipshod, rule-of-thumb methods. Gradually we are introducing new — efficient — methods in all departments of life. Eugenics means efficiency in producing a new generation — doing it right instead of leaving it to accident. All this study of child psychology and hygiene means that we are learning how to supplant the old, hit-or-miss, traditional way of bringing up children by efficient child culture. Every day some new efficiency is being introduced into education. All these political experiments — 'referendum,' 'City Commissions' — mean that we are determined to be governed efficiently. The Socialists and trust magnates are striving — more or less intelligently, but very earnestly — to organize efficient methods of industry. The growing recognition of the value of efficiency — in all phases of life — is the most significant thing in our modern civilization."

Helen had said all this many times before; it was part of her ruined speech. As she repeated it now to Lane, it sounded just as ineffectual as when she had delivered it to that New Jersey women's club.

"It is very interesting," he said politely.

"You don't think so at all," she retorted, much aggrieved at his perfunctory tone. "Why can't you treat me like an equal and argue it out? Don't you think I've enough brains?"

"That is not it at all," he said, in distress. "I did not mean that. Only it is hard to argue with you and your friends — our standards of value are so different. The truth of what you say is so obvious. Only I cannot see in it a saving gospel.

"Even our first parents must have valued efficiency above inefficiency. Every one who is not an idiot must. It is like morals. Every one puts good above evil — but we all need forgiveness. Life is too big — too complex. Nobody but God can be all good. You have a curious joke in America — it strikes me, a stranger, as curious, but it holds a great deal of truth. When you say a man is 'good to his mother,' you mean that he is not much good to other people. Very often to help this one, you must do ill to another. Our Lord Jesus said to leave father and mother and wife and children to follow Him. That must have seemed very bad to Joseph and Mary. They must have thought He lacked filial piety.

"It is the same with wisdom. We cannot be all wise — there is too much to know. If we make up our mind to study very hard one subject — let us say, languages, as I have done — we are sure to be foolish and ignorant in other things — as I am.

"So many of you Westerners fight for freedom. It seems to me evident that we can not be free in every relation. This, of course, is no argument

against wisdom and liberty. Only I think it is necessary to decide which wisdom and which freedom is worth striving for. It is the same with health, with strength, with speed and wealth.

"It is the same, I think, about your gospel of efficiency. None of us can be efficient in everything. Life is too big. We must pick out some direction and try to be good and wise and strong and efficient in that. To me, a religion which preaches only health or knowledge or liberty or skill is just empty words.

"If I were a new Messiah, I would not preach such qualities. I would say: 'My children, only God can be all good. You can only be good a very little. Try to be virtuous in this relation — in the eyes of God it is most important. Only God can be all wise. At best your knowledge will be trifling. It is expedient for you to gather all the wisdom you can on this subject — so will you most please God. You are weak, human beings; you cannot be always in all things efficient. Let all your will, all your skill be bent in this direction, toward this goal — so will you progress in the path of God.' I would not preach qualities. I would preach aspirations."

"Well, what goal would you preach?"

"But I am not a Messiah. I am only one of the little children who are seeking to find the goal. That is the puzzle of life to us in the East. The riddle of the Sphinx.

"Have we found the answer — the master truth, which will make us one with God? No, at least not many of us. Perhaps there are a few of our holy

men, who have found the path; once — possibly twice or thrice — have seen God face to face.

“There is one story in your New Testament which seems wonderfully wise to me — about the Mount of Transfiguration. You remember our Lord Jesus led two of His disciples up on to a high mountain and showed them the glory of God. Well, the disciples wanted to build temples and live there always. But their Master had more sense. He brought them down again. None of us are wise and pure enough to live all our lives in the presence of God.

“I think all the faking and all the fraud in all religions is explained by that story. After earnest striving men have approached the presence of God. They have wanted to stay there in the glory always. They have pretended to others — at last have deceived themselves into thinking — that they could see God whenever they want to.

“God only talked to Moses once in a while — in the Burning Bush — on Mount Sinai. But I think Moses pretended sometimes — to keep his hold on the people — that his own words came from God. It was the same with Mohammed — I think. I doubt if God objects to music and painting. But Mohammed thought such things were wrong and — to make the people believe — he said Gabriel had told him.

“I do not think that any religion has found all the Truth. If we knew everything we would already be divine. But I think some people — not only in the biblical times, but also in our day — climb the Mount of Transfiguration — see all of God’s glory they can comprehend — once in a lifetime — perhaps twice or

thrice. I never have. But the hope makes life worth living.

"Efficiency? Yes, by all means! Let us run the race that is set before us as fast as may be. But speed will not help us if we are on the wrong track. What does it matter that Burns — the greatest of your poets, I think — was a very poor customs official? Does it matter whether Our Lord Jesus was a skillful carpenter? Or whether the prophet was an efficient camel driver? No, their business was to preach the word which God had given them. And, being very sure of their high calling, knowing beyond any doubt what they had to do, they did it well. Speed? Efficiency? All these fine qualities help us only if we are on the true path. They may lead us even farther astray, if we have lost our way."

"And you think I've lost my way?"

"How could I know? Only one thing is sure. Your way will be different from mine. Just as I have sacrificed many kinds of wisdom to my special knowledge, so you must have sacrificed something to your efficiency. Was it a good bargain? That is something which no one can decide for another.

"Your path looks clear to you. You are very sure of your task — or you could not do it so well. Certainly it is noble work — relieving distress. But here, again, our standards are all different. It would not be attractive to me — your work. Yes, our standards are different. Our Prophet, even more than yours, bade us give from our fullness to those who are empty. We give alms — more, I think, than the Christians — but from such a different spirit.

You see the coin and the misery it will relieve and we see the sweet spirit of kindness which stirs one to share abundance with distress. A young man comes riding into market on his ass and, seeing a feeble, blind beggar, gets off and puts the old man in the saddle and trudges along beside him to hold him on. We both feel that it is a beautiful thing. You are glad that the old man is saved the long dusty walk. We are glad that the young man was so kind.

"I have been very hungry — very often — and I have begged and have been fed. Always I have said a prayer to the Most Merciful, a prayer of rejoicing to bear witness that there is some of His mercy among His creatures. I would not like to take alms from a society. I would not know for whom to say *Fatihah* — our prayer of thanks."

Some of what he said Helen did not comprehend. She had been quite truthful when she had said to Eunice: "I don't go in for this esoteric and mystic business." His talk of "seeing God face to face" was a blank to her.

Their standards of value were certainly different. She was not used to grown men who spoke so simply of saying their prayers. It embarrassed her. And having been occupied so long with the routine business of charity, she could not help feeling that it was shameful to beg. It seemed to show a lack of proper pride, of self-respect, to admit so frankly of having asked for alms. How to argue with a man whose point of view was so different? If people are hungry they need food; it had never occurred to her that they might also want "to give thanks."

Much of what he said was disturbingly hard to answer. After all it really did not matter that Bobbie Burns had miserably fumbled His Britannic Majesty's customs service.

It was a very simple, but, in a way, an intensely dramatic scene. Helen was always economical on "office expenses," trying to "reduce overhead charges," so there was only one electric light burning. As the night fell on the city outside, it emphasized the hard brilliance which this green-shaded lamp threw on her desk — her so orderly, business-like desk. She still sat in her pivot chair and the penumbra of the light fell on her face. It was a fine, strong face, a mature face, the little lines of hard thinking, of hard work were beginning to show about the eyes and they were rather emphasized by her distress over Eunice, by her feeling of inability to come to terms with this Stranger, with whom, more than ever, she felt that she must come to terms. Her spirit was a bit haggard.

Lane's voice came out of the semi-darkness, its tone even and soothing, although what he said was only the more distressing. For, as she had not replied, he had begun to talk again.

All that he said was blasphemy, and the sacrilege was being committed in the Inner Temple; for Helen's office was her Holy of Holies. She had, if not a religion, at least a ritual. She did not go to church on Sundays nor to a mosque on Fridays to pray for a few minutes, but six days a week she approached with reverence her roll-topped altar and poured out for hours on end the very best there was in her in

libation to the god she could not name. If Lane could have really understood he would not have scoffed — here in the shrine of so much earnest devotion.

“It is hard to formulate such things,” he was saying. “If the problem were once clearly stated it would be half solved. But this is part of it. One of my earliest memories is of being waked up in the night by a great pounding at our door — it was at our house in Marakesh. My father got up and let in some men — mountaineers from the Glawi. The Kaïd, who was my father’s friend, had been wounded in a fight and was very sick. I could not be left alone, I was only a little shaver. One of the Kaïd’s retainers wrapped me up in a blanket and took me on his saddle-bow. We rode all night and, changing horses, rode right through the heat of the day and all the next night. It was the first time I had been way up in the mountains. I had always thought they were the edge of the world. I remember how surprised I was to find land on the other side and more mountains beyond. I decided that the world must be very big. Just before dawn we reached the Dar-el-Kaïd — the fortress of the Glawi. I was very stiff from riding so long, but I limped after my father into the Kaïd’s room.

“I remember how strong men held him down while my father cut off his leg and how he groaned — although he was a brave man. There were other men about, who held lamps and torches to make much light. In another room there were women, who wailed. I remember the smell — of course I did not

know what it was then — but now I know. It was gangrene — a smell one never forgets. It was all like a nightmare — only much worse. And when my father was finished and was washing the blood off his hands, he saw me. He had forgotten there was such a person while he was at work. ‘Hello, son,’ he said — he always spoke English to me — ‘if I had got here yesterday I could have saved his leg. And — oh, my God! — if I had only had some chloroform!’

“Well, the very first day I reached America — here in New York — I was walking along the street and suddenly a woman screamed. She had been run over by a car. Everything happened so very quickly. Almost at once, I heard a bell clanging up the streets. Everybody got out of the way. A motor ambulance tore up. A doctor, all in white, jumped off and presently the whole street smelled of ether and the woman stopped screaming.

“It seemed more wonderful than I can tell. So quick! So sure! Of course I knew from books that everything was not perfect and joyous in America. But, I said to myself, at least they have reduced physical pain to a minimum. I will not see so many people suffering as I do at home.

“But — is it so? I have been here more than a year. I cannot see that all your marvelous science and antiseptics and surgical skill have reduced pain much. You spoke of the tuberculosis committee. You say you have learned how to cure and prevent it. But still so many people die of it. We do not have it, except in the coast towns where the Europeans have brought it. To be sure you have made an end of

cholera and smallpox. You do not have the plague any more. But still in the end you all die — as we do. You have increased the average length of life a little — a few more years of just such suffering as I am used to. But you have not escaped pain. Nor have you learned how to bear it.

“I talked not long ago with a Red Cross nurse who had been in Turkey during the Balkan War. ‘It was better than nursing Christians,’ she said; ‘they are so brave. It was wonderful the way they died. I have never seen any one die so beautifully. They are not afraid.’ And this seems to me the most important. To know how to deaden suffering is good, but to know how to bear it is better. You in the West have done so much more than we to combat pain and death. But when at last you can no longer escape, you are more afraid than we. It is such things I do not understand.”

He had reached the end of his discourse, and Helen, seeing no immediate reply, changed the subject.

“I’ll have to think all this over. Your viewpoint is so strange — and interesting. A new viewpoint always is. But it’s time to eat now.”

He took her to an Armenian restaurant. It was a dismal, rather dirty place, half filled with somber, homesick men. But all their faces lit up with welcome when Lane came in. Most of them at one time or another had belonged to the “Brothers of the Hills.” They knew of Lane’s exploits. Memories of the brave men of the mountains was the one flaming reality to this band of exiles. Any one who had killed a Cossack was sure of a welcome.

The proprietor hurried up. With his own soiled handkerchief, he brushed the crumbs off a chair for Helen. Lane spoke to him a moment in Armenian.

"It will take a little time for them to get supper," he said, sitting down opposite Helen. "They did not have anything very good ready."

Helen was in a funk. She had asked him to come with the definite purpose of telling him about Eunice's condition. But now she had a sinking feeling that it would be very difficult to find the words to move him. There was an intangible quality about his mind. Considerations which were convincing to her did not seem to be any arguments at all to him. She was strangely nervous — almost hysterical. She had a cowardly impulse to postpone the matter for some more favorable opportunity. It even occurred to her to get Win to intervene. But the same unconquerable persistence, the same reluctance to give up matured plans, which had driven her to bump her way through her speech to that woman's club, while knowing that it was a failure, now pushed her ahead.

All the afternoon she had been busy at that most human of all mental processes — convincing herself of what she wanted to believe — distorting disagreeable facts, ignoring some, and forcing others into a more acceptable mold.

She was much too fond of Eunice to believe that she had willfully deceived Lane. Evidently therefore she did not realize the seriousness of her illness. What could be more plausible? Eunice so rarely spoke of her ailments. It was all very plain — a sad misunderstanding of hard facts.

Sad? Yes. But there is no gain in shedding tears over impossibilities. Eugenics, as she had said to Lane, is a phase of the general movement toward efficiency. A violation of its laws — or what are called its laws — seemed to her especially heinous. If you are inefficient in business, you and your affairs suffer. The loss is your own. But to be careless or wrong in this matter is to strike at the next generation — the hope of the world. It is blasphemy against the holy spirit of evolution, the unforgivable sin against social progress. Surely Lane was reasonable enough to see this if only he knew the facts.

Besides Helen could not believe that he really cared for Eunice in the deep, soul-tearing way which spells tragedy. Always our principal hurt, the most acute pain, in our jealousies is the conviction that the love which the rival has deflected from us, which has passed by us to be bestowed on another, is cheap and of small worth compared to our own emotions. It was humanly impossible for Helen to think that this love with which she was interfering was as real and important as that which was springing up within her. She had no suspicion that her motives were in any way selfish. She felt herself driven to an unpleasant duty. It was best for everybody concerned — a real kindness — that Lane should know the truth.

While she was marshaling these arguments in her mind, he talked of indifferent subjects. Something he said about his studies gave her a chance to open a new subject and postpone the real issue.

“Mr. Lane, are you planning to go on with this work of Orientalism all your life?”

"Oh, no. It's only what you call — 'a pot-boiler.' "

"Well, what will you do next?"

"How do I know? I suppose I'll wander about some more. I want to visit China. And some time, I hope, I will go back to my own country."

"Why do you always speak of yourself as a Moor? You're really an American."

"Yes, legally," he admitted, "because my father was. His father came here from Scotland. But their ancestors — like yours — and everybody's, came out of the Orient. It does not matter what our nationality is. The East is our Grand Fatherland. But is not the place where we were born, the country of our childhood, that we know best and love, our own land?"

"But what prospects are there for you in Morocco? You've brains and abilities which would be useful here. You could make a place for yourself. Be of real service."

"No, I would not fit in. I do not understand your ways."

"You could learn."

"I could learn?"

There was an uncertain note in his voice which implied distaste — perhaps even disdain. Helen had a sudden vision of a Salvation Army lassie asking a ritualistic archbishop to beat a tambourine for her on the street corner and assuring him, when he said he did not know how, that he could learn. Something very like venom flooded her. She wanted to strike back, to hurt this conceited whelp who so calmly

scorned all her ideals. But before she found words, he went on :

“ No, really, I do not think I could learn. I have thought about it a good deal. But you know the proverb — old dogs and new tricks. Always, here, I would be a stranger. I could not learn your ways, if I tried.”

“ You wouldn’t try, even if you thought you could learn. You despise us ! ”

“ No, not at all. I would be very sorry to. It is so easy and so very, very foolish to despise people you do not understand. I think that is the cause of all cruelties, of all persecutions and wars — despising and fearing the things you do not understand. I have really tried to understand you and your ways and I have failed. But it is my fault, not yours. So I had best go back to my own people.”

“ But when you go back,” she insisted, “ what will you do with your life? Haven’t you any ambition ? ”

“ Why — just what I have always been doing — go on thinking about the problem of life — the riddle of the Sphinx, as I called it in your office — keep on searching for the master truth — trying to find my way to God. Does that seem an unworthy ambition to you ?

“ To me,” he added, as she did not reply, “ it seems the only ambition which is worth while.”

If she had given him time, he might have explained that he thought this ambition to find one’s way to God was the motor power which actuated every one who sought after righteousness. It mattered little what word they chose, Allah, Brahma, Jehovah,

Humanity, Justice, Liberty — or even, Efficiency. He felt that she and her friends, consciously or unconsciously, were engaged on the same quest. He only questioned the wisdom of their methods. He did not think they would discover the great truth amid the bustle and clamor of their strenuous and hurried activity. But perhaps they would. He was certain that he was more likely to find his in silent, solitary places.

Luckily the proprietor came out of the kitchen at this moment, followed by his entire staff — two waiters. Lane began to explain to her the various Armenian dishes. And Helen, who had no appetite at all, ate because she could not collect her wits to speak.

It was the irony of her situation that the less she came to terms with this Stranger, the more he caught hold of her imagination.

In all her life she could not recall a definitely religious mood. She had never "sought after God." He said this quest was the one aspiration which seemed worthy to him — this thing she had never done, the only thing he could respect.

It was plain that gorging herself with Armenian food would not get her anywhere. She went over again the arguments which had held her mind all the afternoon — to bolster up her fainting courage. Evidently it was all a mistake. Eunice did not realize how sick she was. Lane had a right to know. Her duty was plain. So she rushed in where an ordinarily sensible angel would have feared to tread.

"Mr. Lane," she said, pushing away from her the

plate of honey and almond paste. "I asked you to come to-night because — especially — I wanted to talk to you about Eunice."

"Yes," he replied, in a most unencouraging voice.

The only reason he had accepted her invitation was the hope that she would talk about Eunice. But now he did not want her to. It was so evident in his voice that it disconcerted her. It precipitated her into a brutality of expression she had hoped to avoid.

"Even if you don't want to talk about it, I think I ought to. She told me that you'd asked her to marry you."

"Yes," he assented doubtfully. To be sure the word "marriage" had not been mentioned between them, but perhaps this was the Western way of speaking of love. Anyhow he might have asked her to marry him, if it had occurred to him.

"I know you mean to be kind to her," Helen went on. "But — you don't understand how sick she is — perhaps she doesn't know herself. But she hasn't long to live."

"Oh," he said calmly. "I know. She told me."

"She told you?" Helen echoed in dismay.

All her carefully built explanation went to smash. He had known all the time — and still he loved her! This was a possibility Helen had not thought of.

"Yes," he repeated, "she told me."

For a moment neither of them spoke and then she looked at him. He smiled back at her — a quick, sad smile, which in spite of her dismay seemed marvelous to Helen.

“If she has not very long to live — well — I must love her all the more now.”

Her elbows on the table, her chin resting on her tightly closed fists, she looked square in his face for a moment; then her eyes lost their focus and she was “gazing off into space.”

To her reason it all seemed hideous. But her reason was soon submerged. His calm disregard of death, his attitude that it was the merest trifle beside love, touched her emotions, dazzled and fascinated her. It reminded her of something she had read about the early Gauls. In the days before Roman civilization had taught them fear it had been their custom, when the gods expressed anger by thunderclaps and bolts of lightning, to rush out of their houses and shoot arrows at the sky in defiance. So puerile — yet so almost divine.

For the first time she realized that the iron had entered her own heart. She was what is called “in love” with this Stranger. Everything else in life seemed so pitifully small. Her triumphs, her manifold successes, all the host of people who respected and admired her — how cold! In this principal business of life, in womanhood, she with all her strength had been outstripped by Eunice, the embodiment of weakness. The palms in the only victory that mattered she had failed to win.

Her dream had wilted the very instant it had blossomed into consciousness. In the same moment she had realized that his love for Eunice was deep and abiding — he would never care for her.

Worse, very much worse, than any personal pain

was the terrible realization that she had been disloyal to Eunice.

She could not stand any more. She stood up briskly, pretending to remember some unfinished work in her office to which she must attend. Luckily it was only a few blocks back to the Charities Building.

CHAPTER XVIII

WIN AND THE STRANGER

Having put Helen into the elevator of the Charities Building, Lane was faced once more with the problem of an evening alone. He walked irresolutely out onto Fourth Avenue. This unrest at the thought of being left to himself was an entirely new experience to him. What to do?

A Westerner would probably have telephoned to Eunice, begging, pleading for permission to come to her. But she had said that she wanted to be alone — at least for this day. It was depressing to realize in what different directions their desires could run.

On the table in his room was an unopened package of books which had come that morning. They were about China. Perhaps they would hold his interest. And perhaps there might be a letter from Eunice in his mail box. So he jumped on a downtown car.

When he reached his door he realized that the books would not interest him. There was no mail for him in his box. A light shone through the transom above Mathews' door.

It would have been impossible for him to express the depth of his gratitude to Win. Through him he had met Eunice.

If you or I should encounter our Great Experience in Timbuku, we would not be more surprised than

Lane had been to find Love in New York. He had wandered all his life, but this trip to America had been his most distant journey. Here on the very edge of his explorations, in this unknown land, he had — so unexpectedly! — found the unifying fact, the thing which gave cohesion to his life.

No matter where he went nor how he fared, these people, Win and his group of friends, would have supreme significance. They had done him a service which his wildest imagination would not conceive of repaying. Always he had been a friend of all the world, but standing there in the ill-lit hall, in his loneliness, his heart went out to Win in a wave of very special gratitude. He knocked.

"Hello, Lane," Win said, as he opened the door. "Glad to see you. I've been trying to get hold of you the last few days. I want to settle up for that Thanksgiving affair. How much do we owe you?"

"Oh, please, nothing at all. The debt is on my side."

"That won't do," Win said, smiling but looking firm. "It was our party. You were our guest. We can't let you pay for it. Mrs. Lockwood has asked me a couple of times about it, says that you promised to tell us how much it cost."

"It was so very little."

But Win insisted.

It was real distress for Lane. These people, to whom he owed so great a debt of gratitude, would not accept a small gift from him. But, after all, it was Eunice who had made him promise to let them share the cost.

“My Armenian friends sent the rugs and cushions over by an apprentice, so that did not cost anything. The property man at the theater lent me the costumes and things — also for nothing. I paid two dollars and a half to have them brought to the Studio and taken back. I gave Hadji Hamid — he was sheik of the Moors — five dollars to buy food — and told him to spend what was left for the boys. I did not keep accounts. I have no receipts. But I remember that the fruit and nuts and charcoal cost a little over a dollar — one dollar and thirty-five cents, I think.”

“That makes eight-eighty-five. Are you sure that’s all?”

“I think so. Unless you want to pay me for what I did. I spent the best part of two days at it. I do not know what you would think that worth.”

“Good Lord!” Win protested. “We’re not trying to insult you. The idea of paying you never occurred to us. We’re no end obliged to you. It would have been a fiasco if you hadn’t taken an interest in it. But just because you were so kind, is all the more reason for us not to let you be out of pocket over it. That’s the way we always do — ‘Dutch treat’ — we call it. You see we’re all more or less Socialists and we like to do things collectively. But you mustn’t think we’re so discourteous as to try to pay you for your kindness.”

He counted out the money and handed it to Lane, who accepted it reluctantly.

“I thought Socialists believed that money was the worst standard for valuing things,” he said. “I do not like to take this, because it is accepting that

standard. Now I must feel that I ought to pay you back for all your kindness — also in money. And that I could never hope to do even if I were very rich. I am sorry," he said, putting the handful of coins in his pocket — and resolving to give it to the first beggar he met — "that we had to talk about money."

Win was mightily discomfited. "Commercialism," the referring of all things to the foot rule of dollars and cents to determine their value, was the phase of our life he hated most. It was this more than all else which had pushed him into revolt and Socialism. It was very unpleasant to have given Lane the impression that he insisted on introducing this standard, even into matters of friendship. He jumped from these unpleasant ideas to another subject.

"You were saying the other night that it was impossible to compare two civilizations — to call one the better. I'm not sure you're right there. Of course, I'm a feminist, and perhaps I'm biased. But isn't the condition of women in a given social group a criterion? A basis of comparison?"

"For instance, at the time of the Balkan War, I read a good deal about those little countries. In Bulgaria forty-five per cent — nearly half — of the school children are girls. That means that they are trying to educate their women. No other Christian country in Southeastern Europe is making a like effort. I think we can say that Bulgaria is more progressive than her neighbors. That her civilization is higher than that of Roumania, Servia, and Greece —

where they make no serious effort to give schools to the women.

"I don't think anything about Mohammedanism at firsthand. But the thing which makes it hardest for me to be sympathetic is what I hear about your treatment of women."

"God never created anything," Lane said with a smile, "which is harder to treat wisely and well than a woman."

Even more than that night when he had sat with them in the café, Lane was reluctant to be alone. He welcomed a subject of discussion, which is — and always has been — interminable.

"It is fairly easy to be decent to men. It is not difficult to be kind to animals. But it is hard to know how to treat women. Solomon is reported to have said that 'the way of a man with a maid' is past all finding out. Certainly we, in the East, cannot pretend to have solved the problem.

"But if you want to try a comparison on this point, you must remember first of all that there is hardly a book in your language, describing the life of our women, which was not written by a Christian missionary. And I have never seen in any book by a missionary a description of one of our happy homes.

"It is rather their business to show up our dark places, to exhibit our sores. Even if they try to write in good faith — as some of them do — it is hard for them. They do not come to us to learn about our life, but to change it.

"It would be very easy for me to write a book in

Arabic about New York women, every word of which would be true, which would give my people a very false picture. I would not have to write it. I could translate it—one of your official reports on the White Slave Trade, or Mr. Kaufman's novel —‘The House of Bondage.’ But that would not seem honorable to me. If I wrote about American women at all, I would try to give a picture of your best women. Your missionaries have not written about us in that spirit.

“Take, for instance, the translations of our Koran. They are horrible! First of all, the Koran is poetry—we think it the most beautiful in our language. The translations are very bad prose. Whenever there is a doubtful meaning the Christian translators have not given us the benefit of the doubt. They are not supposed to be sympathetic—not even impartial. Think what a hard time your scholars have had rendering the Bible into English. Even with the very best will in the world they have found it impossible to keep some of it from sounding ridiculous.

“A few years ago I read in a French book that the Shah of Persia had a thousand wives. At that time he was just twelve years old. It does not take much thought to realize that ‘wives’ is hardly the word to describe the horde of women who wait on that baby prince. In the East it is an immemorial custom for the various provinces and tribes to send one of their daughters to the ruler's household—as a tribute, a sign of loyalty. Some find favor in his eyes—most of them he never sees. The translators of your Bible made this grotesque mistake when they

credited Solomon with a thousand wives. Cæsar Borgia or Henri Quatre or men like that, who have gone in for that sort of thing, might have had passing amours with a thousand women. But Solomon is reported to have been wise.

“It is always difficult to interpret one civilization to another, to translate its books, and explain its customs. Most of the books about us have been by people who through ignorance could not be fair — or for more sordid motives did not want to be. And of all our life, the condition of our women has been most grossly and willfully misrepresented.

“How shall I say it — and still be polite? I ——”

“Don’t worry about politeness,” Win laughed. “I want to know what you really think.”

“Well, I do not think our women would want to change places with yours. You would be quite wrong, if you pictured our women locked up in their harems, pining to be like Christian women. They would be quite sincerely shocked at what would seem to them the gross immorality of your mode of life. They would think — but nothing is gained by calling names. We are only tempted to, when we hear the libels you are told about our Prophet.

“All through his young manhood Mohammed loved one woman, who was much older than he — Khadijah. It is a very beautiful love story. As boys we are taught extracts from the biographies, as in your schools you learn stories about Washington and Lincoln and chapters from your Bible. I can still remember long passages from Ben Ishak. Khadijah was richer than the Prophet and she asked him to

marry her. 'I love thee, my cousin,' she said, 'for the respect with which thy people regard thee, for thy honesty, for the beauty of thy character, and for the truthfulness of thy speech.' She was the first convert to Islam. 'So Khadijah believed,' Ben Ishak tells us, 'and bore witness to the truth of that which came to him from God and aided him — So was the Lord minded to lighten the burden of His Prophet. Whenever he heard anything which grieved him concerning his rejection by men, he would return to her, and God would comfort him through her, for she reassured him — and declared her trust in him and made it easy for him to bear the scorn of the people.' We are fond of love stories in the East and none is more popular, none is more often repeated, than this of Mohammed and Khadijah. From childhood up we are taught to model our lives on his.

"I do not think we have to be ashamed of our ideals in this matter; of some of our practices — yes. Of course there is abuse — especially among the rich, worldly city dwellers. Just as you have a tradition that Paris is a very wicked city, so with us Stamboul — Constantinople — is supposed to be unusually vicious. But I think it is really the hostility of nomadic and agricultural people to the town dweller. I have never visited any city where the standard of morality was as healthy as on the countryside. Cities need special laws. They are so new — and all our laws and customs grew up, in the open.

"You do not enjoy that book of Mr. Kaufman's, to which I referred. There are equally unpleasant

stories with us. The missionaries have made a specialty of reporting such unpleasant things.

“An amusing but illuminating phase of the question is that we have even more funny stories than you about henpecked husbands.

“The worst side of our life is the ignorance of our women. They are good wives and excellent mothers. I think they are more competent in these rôles than most of your women. But few of them have any other wisdom. The ancient men who formed our customs — Mohammed only regulated and purified existing customs — were so anxious not to have their warfare, their business, their study, and contemplation disturbed and thwarted by the intrusion of sex — they were more austere in such matters than your Puritans — that they excluded women from all the parts of life they considered most important. As a result our women are dolefully ignorant of such things.

“Certainly the education which Western children get in their nurseries — from their mothers — is very valuable. Of course you do not trust your women to educate your boys after they get beyond the early teens. But our Muslim women are too ignorant to teach much even to little children. It is a great misfortune — of which some day, I hope, we will be ashamed. But if we ever turn our women out of the shelter of the harem it will not be in order to give them a higher morality — but to give them a higher intelligence.

“And if I understand at all what you mean by

feminism — you also are dissatisfied with the condition of your women."

"Yes," Win admitted. "We, also, have found women hard things to treat well — and sanely."

"It is your women most of all I find hard to understand," Lane went on — "your friends, for instance. As I said the other night, they have so much to make them happy. But do you, who know them well — do you think they are? Perhaps you have a different theory, but we believe that God made men and women to be a comfort to each other. Why are so many of your friends unmarried? Take Miss Cash. I had dinner with her to-night. Is ——"

"Did you?" Win interrupted with interest. "How did it go?"

"We had a long talk."

"Good! I hope you'll get really acquainted with her. She's a wonderful woman — worth knowing well. She's significant. She's the kind we people, who are feminists, are aiming at. Women who develop their abilities and take a worthy place in the work of the world. You say it's hard to treat women well — and it is, so long as we men do the treating — so long as we feel that we have to decide things for them, that it's up to us to make something of them. Let them shoulder their own responsibilities, I say. Let them treat themselves. We men should sit back for a while and let them run their own lives.

"You ask if our women are happy. I don't think that is the standard. There are many things more important than happiness. You don't expect pioneers to be comfortable. If they go out beyond the frontier

and chop down trees and make a path for civilization, we do not quarrel with them because they are not so comfortable as the people who stay at home within reach of porcelain bathtubs!

“Well, why insist that such women should be happy? They’re pioneers, too, Helen and Irene Penton and Eunice Bender and the host of other women in this town who are earning their own living. When women go out after their economic independence — refuse the easy life of getting some man to support them — they are bucking against all the conservative traditions of the race, they are flying in the face of everybody who hates a change — they’re sure to be uncomfortable, the chances are they’ll be unhappy.

“But when they win in the fight, they gain more than their own individual independence — they’ve made it easier for other women. Almost all the older women I know who fought for and won their independence were personally unhappy — lonely, barren, scarred lives. But this younger generation of insurgent women is having an easier time of it. Here and there some of them are managing to be happy as well as independent. For the next generation it will be easier still.

“And when all the women are independent, the sum total of happiness for them, for us men, for the children will be immensely increased — and not only happiness, which seems to me a rather low standard — but life will mean more, be more worth while, will have infinitely more possibilities of fineness, in all its phases and implications.

“That’s the heroic, the admirable part of such

women as Helen. It's very much more than just a self-centered personal freedom, or personal happiness, that they're fighting for. They are determined to make it easier for all women to be free and happy. They go into the fight and laugh at the risk — knowing that the chances are against them. For the greater goal in view, they are willing to lose their personal happiness. I'm more interested in, more inspired by, this feminist movement than by anything else. It is rich in present nobility and full of wonderful promise.

“You see us — and these women — in a period of transition. Perhaps we look grotesque. But you can't expect people who are in the midst of a fight to possess the things they are fighting for. You don't ask Lancaster if his activity for Socialism has made him rich — it's the commonwealth he's struggling for. So why condemn these women fighters because they are not idyllically happy? It's the common happiness they're after.

“Respectable people say that the Suffragettes are coarse and vulgar and unwomanly. They did not go into the fight to acquire refinement and sweet graces. It doesn't matter if the heat of the struggle flushes their faces to unloveliness, it doesn't matter if now and then they lose their tempers and smash windows, it doesn't matter if they sometimes become peevish and virulent. It's a waste of time for them to deny such charges — and rather undignified. Nothing that happens to these individual fighters matters, so long as the fight goes on to victory. There are sure to be wounds in any warfare.

"These women, even the most crabbed and unpleasant of them, are fighting, risking their personal peace and happiness, in the determination that it shall be easier for all women to be gracious and joyous, to love finely, to bear wholesome, noble children, to be just and calm and sweet-tempered toward men — so we won't have to worry over the problem of how to treat them. And if they win — as they surely are winning — what does it matter if some of them, in the turmoil of the fight, have been just the opposite of what they were fighting for?"

"It is always easy to poke scorn at earnest people. Graciousness and the old ideals of beauty all implied peace and relaxation. They — these friends of mine — are too desperately in earnest to care if their hair is brushed. I can understand how to you, a stranger, they may seem unlovely, discontented, unhappy. They are. But nevertheless — and because — they are the hope of the world."

"If you want to understand us, study these movements of revolt — Socialism and Feminism. They are the significant facts of our life. They stand — not for the petty, sordid, unpleasant things America is to-day — but for the things we are determined America shall be. Get acquainted with Helen. She's the type of what we'd all like to be. She's our standard bearer. We're all in love with her."

"Are you?"

"Yes," Win laughed. "There's no reason for me to hide it. In fact I'm rather proud of it."

"Well," Lane hesitated and then plunged into his question. "Why don't you marry her?"

Win laughed again, but withal more seriously.

"In this country I can't buy her from her father. Her consent is necessary."

"Really, I do not want to be inquisitive," Lane said, rebuffed by Win's jest, but very deeply anxious to get at the heart of this Western attitude towards mating, "but I do want to understand you people and so much depends on this sort of thing. Why does not she give her consent? Is she afraid of happiness? Would she rather be childless and alone? Is she afraid of happiness?"

"That's hardly the question," Win replied, quite seriously. "Isn't it, rather, whether I could give her happiness?"

"Our poets have always said that love is happiness."

"I could give her a great deal of that."

"That's just the point. Why doesn't she accept it? Is she hoping for some better thing?"

Win waved his hands in an uncertain gesture.

For a moment they sat there smoking in silence,—each thinking of the Beloved, so different in character—each thinking so differently of love. Their meditations were interrupted by the telephone bell. Pete had come down from Albany, and was having a late supper at the Santa Fe. He wanted company.

Win said he had some work to do, and Lane went over to the café to join Pete. They discussed all manner of things till closing time. In the hallway before their doors, just as they were saying good night, Lane put his hand in his pocket to get his key

and felt the money Win had given him earlier in the evening.

"Oh, McGee," he said, "it is one of your customs I wanted to ask about. On Christmas Day, if you give a person a present, is it expected that he will pay you back the cost?"

"Why, no; where did you get that idea? You never pay a person for a Christmas gift. But generally it's an exchange. I give my girl a box of candy and she gives me a necktie. I suppose in the end the costs about balance. But a person would be offended if you offered to pay money for a Christmas present — if that's what you mean. Why do you ask?"

"Oh, I was just trying to understand. Good night."

"Good night."

In his room, Lane saw on his desk the verses he had started to translate. He set to work on them again and for an hour or more struggled over the problem of how to render into English the intricate rhythm and interlaced rhyme of the Arabic original. This he decided at last he could not do. "It is a poem," he wrote, "about that proverb I quoted to you this morning. I have only tried to give the thought. I do not know English well enough to translate the form."

He went out to post the envelope containing the verses and his little note, so that she would get them with the morning mail. In spite of the bitter cold, he walked on and on, the night through.

CHAPTER XIX

PARTING

What seemed bitterest to Helen, as she sat alone in her office, after the Armenian dinner with Lane, was the fact that she had sinned against Eunice. Loyalty was the virtue which she ranked above all others.

She had presumed to think it her duty to warn Lane of Eunice's condition. She ought never to have doubted that Eunice herself would have told him. Somehow this fact stood towering above the ruin which filled her heart. It had been underhand for her to come to him without first consulting Eunice. She had been disloyal to her dearest friend. She saw this act of hers with horrifying clearness. In her abasement she told herself that those cynics are right who say that always in a crisis women are selfish and unreliable. Had it been jealousy — crude, vulgar jealousy, an unscrupulous will to defeat a rival — which had led her to intervene?

The destruction which follows pride, the fall which trips the haughty spirit, is a tragic thing. Outside, the roar of the city gradually died down to its night-time rumble. One after another, people who had been working late in neighboring offices turned off their light and went gladly home from their labor.

Helen, who had sinned in pride and haughtiness, sat there alone in her dark office, her heart broken and contrite.

In the welter of her distress, she hardly thought of her own still-born dream. Her relation to Eunice seemed very much more important. She had been disloyal. That seemed more momentous to her than any distress or heartbreak of her own. Only one thing could she see clearly. She must make amends to Eunice. From now on she would be loyal. But the despair of the situation was that she had no idea of what was the thing to do.

Eunice heard Helen's latchkey, when at last she came home. She had been waiting for her. She jumped up and held out her hands in pleading appeal.

"I'm so glad you've come. I wanted to talk."

"Oh, Eunice, dear, are you having another bad night?"

"No. Oh, no! But I had to see you. There is something you must do for me. See him. Have a long talk with him. Tell him everything — how impossible it is. He won't listen to me."

If there had been a Judas tree at hand, Helen would have hanged herself.

"I have seen him — had dinner with him. Of course, I ought to have waited till you asked me to. But — well — I didn't understand. I didn't stop to think."

"You always do the right thing, Nell. But — what did he say?"

"He didn't say anything — except that you'd already told him. Oh, yes, he said he must love you

even more than if you were entirely well. He was quite wonderful about it."

A quality in the sadness of Eunice's face dropped out, never to appear again. She had been haunted by the fear that it was all a mistake. She had needed some outside, or third party, assurance. One glory or life, at least, her sick body had not denied her. Knowing the worst, he still loved her.

"It is so wonderful," she said, "happening to me!"

Helen had always thought of Eunice as pretty. Now, for the first time, she saw her beauty. Her hair was down in two great braids and the soft eider-down chamber robe hung about her like the vestments of a mediæval Madonna. Her face shone with a strange light—illuminated by the radiance of a joy Helen had never known.

A great awe fell on her. She was no longer surprised that Lane had preferred Eunice. The scales fell from her eyes and she caught a momentary vision of a new heaven and a new earth—a vision of new values. All her self-complacency, all her confident assurance, was stripped from her. Her soul shivered in its nakedness.

It was a strange comfort for her to hold tightly to Eunice. She felt herself the weak one of the two. It was she who needed shelter and protection.

"Tell me, Nell, what ought I to do—for him? It's such a priceless thing he has done for me."

Of course, Helen could not answer.

"Tell me," Eunice urged. "You always know what you ought to do."

"Not now. I'm all at sea. I don't know what you ought to do."

She made a great effort to regain her poise, to be reasonable.

"I don't know what you ought to do, Eunice. I'm lost in this. At first it seemed to me all wrong. And now it seems to me — well — only as if it ought to be wrong."

"Of course, it's wrong," Eunice said wearily. "I know that. But that doesn't help."

But somehow it did help.

"Good night," she said, "I must write to him. I couldn't until you had told him."

While love is always wondrous, it is by no means always joyous. It was poignant pain to these two. In the egoism of her own immense experience Eunice had no eyes to look closely at her friend, to suspect even vaguely the slough of misery into which she had plunged.

"Thank your gods, Helen, dear," she said, "that you never get into such piteous tangles. It would be so gloriously simple, if I were only well. Good night."

In her impatience to commune with him, her good night kiss to Helen was scant indeed.

"Beloved," she wrote, "sit very still with me a little while and let me talk to you. It's late at night now. I've been thinking, ever since you left, about you — about us — and nothing else. First of all and most of all, I've been praying to all my gods, to everything I ever worshiped, asking to be taught some marvelous way to tell you how utterly I thank you for loving me. I'd rather tell you that even than how very, very much I love you."

"You said that Love was the Door into the Paradise of God. Dear One, you have opened it for me and have led me into the Garden. Always, always, I have dreamed of it—but I never, never expected to enter it.

"You see, I've always been sick. It could not seem so marvelous to a girl who was strong, who had always expected, as a matter of course, that some day she would meet Love. Although I've often watched people who were in love and have read books and poems about it and have wondered what it would be like, I've never dared to dream that it would come to me. And so I am all breathless and amazed by the Beauty of the Garden.

"People have always been kind to me. I can hardly remember any unkindness. All the dear friends here in New York—I'm glad to think that they are your friends, too, now. And above all, Helen. Dear Heart, you do not like her very well. It's because you do not know her—the real person. I could never tell you how fine she is—nor how very, very much she has done for me. You must try to like her—for my sake.

"And people have pitied me. So many fine, kind people pity me. I like their kindness, but their pity is hard to bear. And I thought that was all Life could give me—Kindness and Pity.

"I don't suppose any one ever pitied you. So even you, who are so much more understanding than the rest, can't quite understand.

"Perhaps you, too, pity me. I don't think so. I've never been conscious of it. That's one of the very biggest reasons why I love you. No, even you cannot understand what it means to me—who have always been pitied—to be loved. It's much too wonderful for me to tell—even to you.

"No matter what happens, Dearest One, you must never, never for the tiniest minute doubt that I do love you—with all my heart—all—all of me. Just because it is so unexpected, so un hoped for, I am sure that I love you more than any one else could.

"It almost makes me glad of my ill health. I could not love you so utterly if I'd been well.

"I'm afraid it's very selfish—this heart of mine, which is

now all yours. It's so unused to Love. We accept your Gift of Love—my heart and I—wondrous gift—oh, so joyously. But we're dazzled by it. And it's hard for us to be sensible about it—very, very hard.

“But, Beloved, in this Glorious Garden of Love, we must not let selfishness enter. According to the old, old story, it was Eve who let the serpent in. It was her unworthiness, so the story goes, that drove us all out of the Garden into this world of misery and sin and sickness. So, above everything else, it seems important to me to be very sure that nothing *I* do shall drive *us* out.

“I know it would be utterly wrong for me to let you spoil your life, just to feed this amazing new joyousness in my heart. You have a right——”

But she scratched out this sentence. She knew it would have no effect. He was thinking of his desires, not his rights. It was useless to develop this idea. She cast about wistfully in her mind for an argument which would have weight with him. It was several minutes before she found her cue and began to write again.

“There is another thing, Beloved, that I am sure no one in all the world but you could understand. If I went with you to your beautiful country——”

She broke off, tore this up, and began again:

“While I was thinking of us this afternoon, perhaps I fell asleep, anyhow I dreamed—of the flat roof of your house and the moon you love so much shining on the snow crests of your dear mountains. And, Beloved, your head was in my lap and I was stroking your hair—your heart will tell you how happy we were. But, if I came with you, it would not be like this dream. I would be sick. And you would be distressed because I was far from my doctor. Worry like that would spoil the dream.

"Even if you stayed with me here in New York, Beloved, it would be the same. You would see how sick I am—the ghastly ugliness of it—and pity me! And—oh, my Beloved—I cannot bear even the thought of that!

"You cannot understand all this means to me. But I hope you will try to understand—a little.

"Of course, if I were strong, I'd come with you. There wouldn't be any question—not the tiniest hesitation. How could I be happier than with your dear arms about me? But—please try to understand—when I'm sick, I'm glad you cannot see me. It doesn't matter so much to be pitied by strangers, the doctor, a hired nurse—or by friends, like Helen—but, oh! it would spoil Love.

"Yes, I think you'll understand. You see, I've been pitied so much—always. I've never been loved but this once. And I want to keep this Love pure from any taint. Pity would kill it.

"So, Beloved, you must go away. No matter where our bodies are, even if we never see each other again, our spirits will be together, walking, so close together, in God's Garden of Love.

"You will leave me here to live the time that is left me—it will not be very long. I am quite sure it will not be very long. Now that you have come to me; now that you have taught me the story of how Love and the Lover and the Beloved are One, there isn't any more reason why I should live longer. Always the wonder and the glory of your Love will be about me like a garment—like an intimate kiss. I am not afraid to go from our Garden to the Greater Garden. And I will be waiting for you there, very close to the Gate.

"Beloved, you will not argue with me about this. Perhaps it won't seem right to you. But even if you don't quite understand, I know you will take my word for it. You have taught me so much about Love—but Love itself has taught me this. I am quite sure I am right. Nothing else matters, since your Merciful God has shown us His Garden. No, the rest, what

happens to our bodies, does not matter any more. And you will let me have my way.

"It is all so precious to me. I don't dare to risk spoiling it.

"When you get this letter—it is all my heart open to your eyes, the eyes I love so much—you will try to understand. You will make this sacrifice for me.

"But you will come once more to say good-by. You will kiss my two hands, as you did—when was it, dear? It seems at once so very long ago and so very much just now. And once—I will kiss you.

"Then, Beloved, you will not make it hard for me by arguing. You will remember how weak I am, how I have just come into the Garden and have not yet had time to learn its ways—have not had time to shake off the dust of the Outside.

"You will not make it hard for me. You will let me kiss you once more and then, Beloved, you will go—even if I cry to have you stay.

"Yes, it is very hard to write it. It will be harder to-morrow to have you go; but it is best. We must keep ourselves worthy—we must not soil this Gift of God.

"But first, before you go—you will come to me—that I may kiss you."

The nine o'clock morning mail brought to Eunice Lane's verses. On the same round the postman delivered her letter to him.

Ali Zaky Bey, that progressive and enlightened Oriental who approved of our Western civilization, was snoring off the effect of a Christian debauch when the letters were brought up to their apartments.

Eunice had seen clairvoyantly into the heart of her lover. She had found the one argument he could not dispute. She asked him to go, in order that Love might be preserved unsullied. To this he could find no reply.

Of course he did not follow her reasoning. As he did not worship health, he could not understand her shame of disease, nor her dread of having him become intimate with her sickness.

The Oriental, in a manner which often seems cruel to us, is contemptuous toward many forms of weakness. — He can sympathize deeply with the pain of others. His literature is full of tragedy, much of his music is minor. But he does not understand what we call "pity."

There was more of a slur in Lane's admiration of Helen's strength than in his sympathy with Eunice's weakness. It had never occurred to him to feel, in any slighting way, sorry for her.

But he could share her dread of anything which might lessen Love. She said his continued presence would. It was not to be argued.

It was a strange attitude of mind which he must ponder over, think out at leisure. Now she was waiting for him. It was only a few minutes across the Square to her door. "Mr. Lane to see Miss Bender," he told the negro hallboy. He managed to keep his tone casual. But his soul raged as he had to wait on the mechanics of our civilization. He knew Eunice was expecting him — why wait for the confirmation of the telephone? He would have liked to feel every muscle taut in some supreme effort to reach her. He had to stand passively and let a hydraulic elevator carry him upstairs. Then he had to press an electric bell and wait for Jenny to tell him once more that Eunice was there. At the end of the little hallway she was standing in the library door, holding

aside the portières. At last there were no more machines between them.

She stepped back at his approach and, as the curtains falling into place hid them from Jenny's inquisitiveness, she held out her hands to him to be kissed. He gathered her into his arms and led, half carried, her across the room to the couch.

"At least," he said, "I may stay a little minute."

He sat down on the floor at her feet, his head resting against her knee and of one of her hands he kept tight hold. With the other she gently touched his hair and neck and cheek. And all the air about them glowed.

"Your verses, Beloved," she said, "are very beautiful."

"Beautiful? Yes, and also very wise."

"I will always keep them very near my heart — your heart."

He pressed his face into her hands.

But presently he turned so that he could look up into her face. Her eyes were closed, her cheeks wet. But it was her pallor which stirred him most. There was a movement of revolt within him. Perhaps it was the blood of his Western parents.

"Are you very sure," he asked solemnly, "that it will be greater and finer if I go?"

"Yes, I am sure." She opened her eyes and looked at him with courageous steadfastness. "It is for Love's sake — for our sakes — that I ask you to go."

She shuddered slightly and then, as though afraid of losing courage, she spoke sharply:

"Now."

But she was the braver of the two as they stood up.

"I have your Gift safe in my heart of hearts, Beloved."

Her smile was so full of silent, certain joy that it held him breathless. A great light shone into all obscure places for him. He knew that she was right. And, as though the light of her smile were reflected to her from his eyes, it illumined the Dark Valley for her. She was not any more afraid.

She put her hands up to his shoulders, caressed him once more with her smile and kissed him.

"I will tell God," she said, "how you showed me the way."

If he could have spoken with the tongues of angels he could have found no adequate reply.

She walked with him to the door of the library and watched him go down the hall. He turned, as he opened the door, for a last look. She was still smiling that steadfast smile which made her seem so close.

Two flights below, a woman with a harsh voice wrangled with the janitor. The elevator came rushing down from above. The negro boy, seeing Lane standing there, jerked the machine to a stop.

"Down!" he bawled.

CHAPTER XX

FRANK AND THE STRANGER

Lane never remembered how he got down from Eunice's door, out into the street, across the Square to his rooms.

There come dazed moments to all of us — to the wisest as surely as to the merely learned — when all our habits of thought break down and there is nothing left with which to reason. He threw himself down on his divan, bewildered, seeking desperately for some solid thought on which to anchor his mind.

At last one clear ray of light shone through the tempestuous clouds which covered his sky. He must go; he must escape from this hard land, from these people he could not understand — who thwarted Love.

Eunice — even if it were “written in the Book” that their love should end thus abruptly — had changed everything for him. His wanderings were over. There was no more any reason for him to search further. He threw into a corner his books about China. He would go home. He would go to Marakesh and sit a while beside his mother's grave. He could not remember her; but now she seemed very needful to him. He wanted to confide in her.

Then he would go to his mountains. This decision gave him something to do. It was some relief to puzzle out a “sailing list,” there was a boat for

Gibraltar on Saturday. He worked feverishly, sorting over his accumulation of books and papers. Most of them went into the fire — there was so very little that had any meaning left for him. He was unconscious of the passage of time and so was surprised when he was interrupted by a knock on the door, to see by the clock that it was mid-afternoon. The visitor was Frank.

Lane had been entirely unconscious of the storm he had stirred in Frank. Of all this group of friends, Frank was the heretic, the most bitterly dissatisfied with their manner of life. He had no reverence for their tribal gods. He observed their taboos only because the rest did. This Stranger had attracted him by outspoken criticisms of these gods. The little voice had urged him to greater intimacy, but he had held back because he was unaccustomed to people who treated shams with respect, because he, himself, was so used to shams. It seemed a fearsomely bold thing, overbold, to talk freely with a person who questioned the accepted gods. No one could tell where such a conversation might lead.

Under the spell of an entirely unusual passion for Beauty, Frank had put his neck into the Yoke of the Usual. The traces galled him acutely, but he had become tamed — harness broken. This was why Lane attracted and frightened him. Frank was a clean-limbed hunting horse used for hauling a dray. Lane sounded the "view halloo!" Caution told him not to listen.

But he had had a dismal luncheon with his wife.

Once more the question of "making the most of himself" had been drearily fought out. He had escaped to his studio and tried to work, but even the semi-mechanical task of drawing Gulliver and the horses would not go. In despair, he had given into the little voice, which egged him on. "What harm in getting better acquainted?" it had said. "You can skirt carefully around the fringes of the dangerous subjects. You don't have to talk about the things which really matter." And so he had knocked at the Stranger's door.

With the observant eye of the artist, he noticed at once the new lines in Lane's face. "My God!" he said to himself, "this man is suffering too." This realization was a new push toward intimacy. "He will not laugh," the little voice said, "he will understand."

"Glad you came in," Lane greeted him. "I wanted to see you. You and Mrs. Lockwood have been so very kind to me. And Christmas is coming. You will accept, I hope, a little gift — a souvenir. Do you think your wife would care for this tea tray? It is a rare kind. It is Afghan work. The Kaïd of Glawi brought it back from his Hadj and gave it to my father. And this pile of pillows. Perhaps, if I left them with you, you would have them give the Thanksgiving guests — with a kind thought from me — Christmas presents? I am afraid I will not have time to attend to it myself — or to make any farewell calls."

"What?" Frank asked in surprise. "You're leaving us?"

"Yes, I sail on Saturday."

"Why are you going?"

Lane shrugged his shoulders vaguely.

"Why stay?"

"Oh! Somehow one generally does," Frank said with a wry smile, trying to speak lightly. "It's supposed to be a virtue — 'to stick.' There's something in the Bible about it — having put your hand to the plow you mustn't side-step till you've reached the end of the furrow."

"That's all right," Lane replied, "provided you get started in the right furrow."

This was exactly the point the little voice was always bothering Frank about. Was he in the right furrow? In spite of his diffidence, he was being sucked at once into the vortex of his problem.

"Yes, but how to get out — when once you're in wrong? That's the question! It would be easy, if you could see the right furrow clearly. But what to do, when all you know is that the furrow you're in is wrong? That's the trouble. You don't always know where the right furrow is -- where it begins or where it leads. Without knowing where you are going you get started. Everybody stands around and slaps you on the back and says: 'Stick to it, old man! Don't be a quitter! Stick!'

"Did you ever read 'Gulliver's Travels'? I'm doing some pictures for it. It's like that — the Lilliputians. We're all tied up with little threads — what's expected of us. We're bound hand and foot and soul — by these expectations. Tiny threads,

each one of them. Such stupid threads, weak threads, but so damned many of them.

"Take my case. I'm a man. Nobody asked me if I wanted to be a man — nor if I like it. But thousands of things are expected of me — just because I'm a man. I happen to have been born in America. I'm expected to be a citizen — to take an interest in politics. I don't know Tariff from Free Trade, but I'm expected to pretend I do and vote about it. I've a host of friends — the best friends in the world. But they don't want me to be myself — they want me to be what they think they have a right to expect of me. I'm married — more binding threads. No end of things are expected of me on that score. Little things — each one a tiny, weak thread — easy to break, but so many of them. Here a little, there a little, and it kills the soul.

"You're lucky. You can go. If you stayed, you'd get tied up, too — in the expected things. Yes, you're lucky. You've not been caught. I am. I'm expected to 'stick.' And just as sure as can be it means death — death to everything that is fine in me — death to all the gods have given me. You're free. You can go."

"Yes," Lane said, but without any exultation in his voice, "I can go."

He thought it over a moment and then, having conquered the catch in his throat, we went on:

"No, I'm not bound in the way you speak of. I would not stay in a furrow I knew was wrong because my friends expected me to — not if I thought it would

kill my soul. I would think more of what God — you say ‘the gods’ — expected of me.”

“It’s a frightful tangle!” Frank said gloomily. “All these little threads! Yes, you’re lucky. You take an ax and chop the Gordian knot. You just walk away. But I’m expected to stick. I’m sentenced for life.”

Lane was surprised at this outbreak, but, too numb from his own despair, he did not reply. This freedom of his to go which Frank seemed to envy did not seem gay to him. He turned away to open a box of cigarettes. For a moment or two they smoked in silence.

And all the while the little voice kept at Frank. “He’s leaving,” it said. “You’ll never get another chance. Talk to him. You’ll never meet another man like this as long as you live.” And Frank wanted to talk. He did not want sympathy, he did not want advice. But a great load would be lifted from him if only he could tell some one. And this Stranger was going away soon. That made it easier. He had not expected to talk about Lillian when he came, but before he knew it, he was doing so — once started he had to go on.

“Of course, most of all, it’s the wife. Years ago, I found a woman who was beautiful — the most beautiful woman, I think, the gods ever made. And I worship beauty. Every bit of me wanted to fall down and adore. The only way they would let me worship was to take her to church and tell a crowd of people, who weren’t interested. A lot of vows — my furrow.

“It’s good to worship. You know that. I was

willing to do anything they asked, if they'd let me worship. I wasn't niggardly about it. I didn't try to bargain. I just gave all I had, all I hoped to be.

"Well, they put us in the same house! My God, if only we could have been a little apart! If I could have gone to her every Sunday, as one goes to mass — but in the same house —

"I don't believe it's possible to worship at close quarters. You can't worship what teases for a new hat or cries for a motor car. And when you can't worship — it's fierce! Pretty soon you forget how. But still they expect us to go on living in the same house.

"Of course, the wife's only part of it. It's all the people I know — close friends, mere business acquaintances — they've all pasted labels on me, expect certain things of me. Oh, I try to understand — but it isn't a net that you can straighten out — these little threads, it's just a tangle. There's the wife's mother and what she expects and what she taught her daughter to expect of a husband. My mother and what she taught me to expect of a wife. And all the books the wife and I have read — they taught us to expect things. Our grandmothers and great-grandmothers — I suppose, it goes clear back to the monkeys. Probably they made each other miserable in the same way.

"Shams! That's the worst of it. Nobody wants truth. All these little threads are expectations that you'll lie — say the thing which is false, pretend you're what you aren't. Pretense! Lies! — to the end of the furrow!

"God, how I hate it all! Isn't there any chance of truth? Why, even Win — my best friend — would be shocked to death if I talked like this to him, told the truth. I'm expected to love my wife — or pretend to! Nobody cares whether I do or not. It's only the pretense that's demanded.

"If I were wildly in love with some other woman — quite crazy — he'd do what they call 'making allowances.' But as long as I'm not insane about some other woman, I'm expected to 'sit tight.' 'You've made your bed,' he'd say, 'you must sleep in it' — and he'd never realize what horror that means!

"I'm not in love with any one else. I haven't that facile excuse. So I'm expected 'to stick.' No one would understand that all I want is to be let alone — to try to be myself. To worship my own gods — in my own way.

"It's hopeless to try to make them understand. But I want to beat it. I want to jump out — leave this rotten furrow — start again. I know I'll die if I stick — all that's good in me — all the soul I have. I want to ——"

He stopped suddenly, tongue-tied, aghast at his own words. Never, even to himself, had he stated so baldly the obvious way out of his difficulties. He was startled, thrilled, and a little terrified at the vision of freedom his words called up. But according to all the accepted canons, Lane ought to remonstrate with him. He waited sullenly, defiantly, for the expected words of reproof. But Lane was in no hurry.

"Does your wife love you?" he asked at last.

His question echoed those of the little voice uncannily.

"Does she? I'm always asking myself that. Not what I mean by love. No. And yet — in her own way — perhaps she does. She doesn't understand me at all, but she's made up her mind what I ought to be. It isn't just crude money selfishness. It's more subtle than that. The money's only a symbol. She hasn't tried to find out what I'd like to be, but she knows what she wants. She wants me 'to make the most of myself.' That's a pet phrase of hers.

"I could make the money she asks for. It would mean painting pretty pictures of ugly women, self-advertising, bootlicking, invitations to smart house parties — that sort of thing — a big noise! That's what she thinks would be 'making the most of myself.' I could do it. Most people think I should. I probably will, if I take their advice — do the expected thing — 'stick.'

"But it would kill me. It would be the unforgivable sin — the sin of the priest whose only creed is his greed — his empty belly to fill — who sells his god in driblets — thirty pieces of silver a month! It would kill everything in me which is anywhere near divine."

"We must be very tender to women," Lane said, after a thoughtful pause. "What would happen to your wife if you left her?"

"Oh, I suppose she'd be unhappy — for a while. Of course she would. Every one would expect her to be unhappy. She's just as much tied up in this mat-

ter as I. Every one would tell her she had been treated shamefully. It isn't exactly a compliment to have your husband desert you. Her mother did not want her to marry me. She'd say 'I told you so.' Of course she'd be unhappy.

"But she'd go home and live with her parents — they're rich now — and very fond of her. And after a while she'd marry a banker and be happier — much!"

Lane started to light his hubble-bubble pipe and had some difficulty getting it to draw. He seemed to have forgotten Frank for the moment. Then he suddenly asked a question which seemed irrelevant:

"Do you believe in a life after death?"

"Why, no, no! I guess this is all we can count on. Of course, there's a 'perhaps'; but it's too vague to matter. Why do you ask?"

Lane seemed to be turning an answer over in his mind.

"It seems to me — well — of course, I *do* believe in what you call 'the perhaps.' Yes, I believe in something beyond the grave." He hesitated again and then, as though he had found a path through a tangle of thought, he went on more readily: "The Christians believe in a heaven and hell — and their God orders them to mutilate themselves here below in order to deserve a lasting happiness above; St. Simon Stylites and that kind. If you believe that this life is only a dot with a limitless everlasting beyond, and that it pleases your God to see you scourge your body — if you believe your God wants you to suffer and will reward you for your self-inflicted pain — why, then it is

simple. For painful duties in this short life you are promised eternal bliss. There would be no problem at all. Only a fool would hesitate.

"But if you do not believe this — if you do not believe in any existence beyond the grave — why, I think the most important thing of all would be to save your soul alive — at least till the body dies."

Frank paced nervously back and forth through the room. Lane, seated cross-legged on the divan, smoked unmoving, lost in his own thoughts, hardly conscious of the distressed presence before him.

The early twilight of December fell abruptly. The electric arc lights sputtered into life and glowed outside on the snow-covered Square. The room was quite dark when Frank, stopping suddenly, broke the silence.

"Where are you going?"

Lane shook himself out of his reverie.

"Me? Oh, I'm going home, back to my own country — Morocco — to my little farm up in the Glawi. You would love the place, because you love Beauty. If that is your god, you would find it a Holy Land.

"It is not much of a house — no modern comforts. But just outside the door there is a little stream — the clearest water you ever saw — 'fresh melted from the snows above' — a musical little stream. It runs through my garden — oranges and olives and almonds — and melons — the sweet rock melons of the hills. And beyond the garden, the little stream tumbles over the ledge — down into the valley. Yes, it is very beautiful.

"And no one binds you with little threads — as you

say they do here. One's prayers are not interrupted.

"There is a flat roof to my house, where one can sit and watch the lights on the snow of the Great Atlas — across the valley. There are no modern comforts, but there is peace."

"Is there an extra room?"

"Oh, yes. Of course! Even the poorest among us has room for the guest. Come, you will be welcome."

Frank began again his nervous pacing. Suddenly, harshly, the telephone bell rang. Lane glared at it indignantly for a minute. Then, thinking it might be a message from Eunice, he sprang to answer it.

"Yes," Frank heard him say, "this is Lane. . . . Oh, Miss Cash? . . . I'll come, at once."

CHAPTER XXI

ADIEU

When Lane had left Eunice that morning, Jenny, the Jamaican maid, had felt aggrieved. She had sensed a romance in the air and wanted to overhear. But their voices in the library had been too low. In peevishness she had made more than necessary noise with the dishes. When he had come down the hall to leave she had stopped her clatter and strained her ears. But there had been no farewell that she could hear.

"Goin' away without sayin' 'good-by,'" she had commented to herself. "Them mus' 'a' 'ad confusion. White folks is ——"

But her verdict on the ways of the white folk had been interrupted by a crash in the library. She wondered for a second if her mistress of the gentle voice had taken to smashing the furniture. Then fear laid hold of her and she rushed to bear aid. Eunice lay, an inert mass, on the floor. Her face was white, past any semblance of life. It took Jenny several minutes to collect her wits, pick her up, and telephone to Helen.

Dusk had already fallen when Eunice regained consciousness. In the second before she opened her eyes a realization came to her — a certainty. It was only verified by the sight of Dr. Riggs beside her bed, of

the white-clad nurse, and of Helen's strained, anxious face.

She smiled at them all a moment, comprehendingly — reassuringly. Her voice, though weak, was very clear.

"I won't bother you much longer. It has come at last." She was so evidently unafraid that the doctor did not try to deceive her.

"Well," she said, with a note which was almost gay in her voice, "I'd like to see him."

This request was a new dart in Helen's already torn heart, a new pang of jealousy. Even Eunice, who had always depended so on her, turned away in this supreme moment to some one else.

In spite of the pain, Helen's mind set efficiently to work. It was some comfort to her in her misery to know that when she was needed she did not lose her head. As she turned to the door, a detailed plan of campaign to find Lane matured in her mind. If he were not in his rooms, she would telephone to Ali Zaky Bey at the consulate. She would dispatch Win and Frank and Lancaster in search of him.

Eunice was happier than she had ever been. Now — now that she was so sure, no one could blame her for her love. She had a right to show it openly. It was almost like a marriage ceremony — a public announcement. The joyous pride of it brought a faint color to her cheeks.

She asked the nurse if they had found a piece of paper in her blouse with verses on it. Yes, they had put it under her pillow. This seemed to satisfy all her wishes.

"I wouldn't like to lose it," she said. "I want it buried with me."

"He's coming," Helen said, as she returned from the telephone.

"Doctor," Eunice said, "can't you give me something — just a little something — a little time?"

"How soon will he get here?" he asked Helen.

"Right away. It's just across the Square."

The nurse, anticipating the order, stepped forward with a tray, covered with bottles and bright silver instruments.

"You are all so kind," Eunice said, as Dr. Riggs pressed a bit of cotton to her wrist where the needle had pricked her. "So very, very kind. And you — Helen — most of all. You mustn't cry, dear. I'm so happy."

The doorbell rang and Helen hurried away to let him in.

Helen could not bear the sight of their greeting. She stood, wet-eyed, in the hallway and waited — and waited. After a few eternities the nurse came to the door and beckoned to her.

The doctor stood by the window. Lane had taken his place beside the bed. Eunice, whose calm and joyous smile seemed uncanny to Helen, beckoned with her free hand. Her voice was very weak now. As Helen bent over her to kiss her, she whispered:

"Isn't it wonderful? He came just in time — from the ends of the earth. Tell them — I want you to tell all the dear friends — not to pity me. I'm so very happy."

She smiled at them all once more. Her eyes sought her Beloved. And then she closed them very gently. She put the last faint tremor of her strength into the hand he held — and went her way.

The doctor did not notice her departure so quickly as Lane. He knew at once. He stood up, kissed the hand he had held, and laid it back beside her on the bed. Then, not realizing that his act was anything unusual, he opened the windows. For thus, in the East, it has ever been the custom of the best beloved to give the dear departing soul a clear exit, a free passage to its new home.

“If you do not mind, I will recite *Fatihah*.”

He stretched out his hands in the attitude of prayer and intoned the sonorous Arabic.

“*El-hamdu-l'llah!*
Arbi el-Aleemeen,
Er-Rameen, Er-Raheem —”

It was as though he had cast a spell over these Unbelievers. No one of them moved until he had finished.

“Now,” he said, glancing once more at the face he had loved, “I will go.”

Helen walked with him to the door. It seemed necessary to say something. She had a sure feeling that she would never see him again. The only words which came to her were not at all what she would have liked to say.

“I thought you said the *Fatihah* was a prayer of Thanksgiving?”

“It is. The Most Merciful has given her peace!”

EPILOGUE

The funeral was on Saturday morning. The Stranger watched from a distance till the carriages had driven away. His boat sailed at sundown and he sat alone beside the grave all the afternoon.

Through the evening, hour after hour, he paced the deck, watching the flash of Sandy Hook grow fainter and fainter. Frank, his arm around a stanchion, leaned over the rail.

Almost as silently Win sat with Helen in her library. There was nothing for anybody to say.

At last Helen bestirred herself and brought from her desk a sheet of paper.

“He sent her some verses—that last day. I thought you might like to see them. Here’s a copy.”

“A commentary by Sidi Abd er Raheem Roumi on the proverb:

“If the seed did not die, there would be no plant;

“If the flower did not fade, there would be no fruit.”

Alas! The spring brings pain!

The tender bark is torn by bursting buds.

The branches agonize with urgent sap,

The world from winter’s deathlike sleep awakes.

Rejoice! The buds give birth!

The blossoms burst to eager, joyous life.

In pain unspeakable the mothers moan.

New generations come, the old must die.

Alas! The flowers are sick!

The roses fade, the peachbloom wilts.

The falling petals praise the Lord and bid
Us hope. For after them the harvest comes.

Rejoice! The fruit is ripe!

The branches bend. The flow'ring time is past.

By sacrificial death our joy is bought —
Each luscious peach has cost a wilted bloom.

Alas! The summer's gone!

The orchard's bare — but now the barns are full.

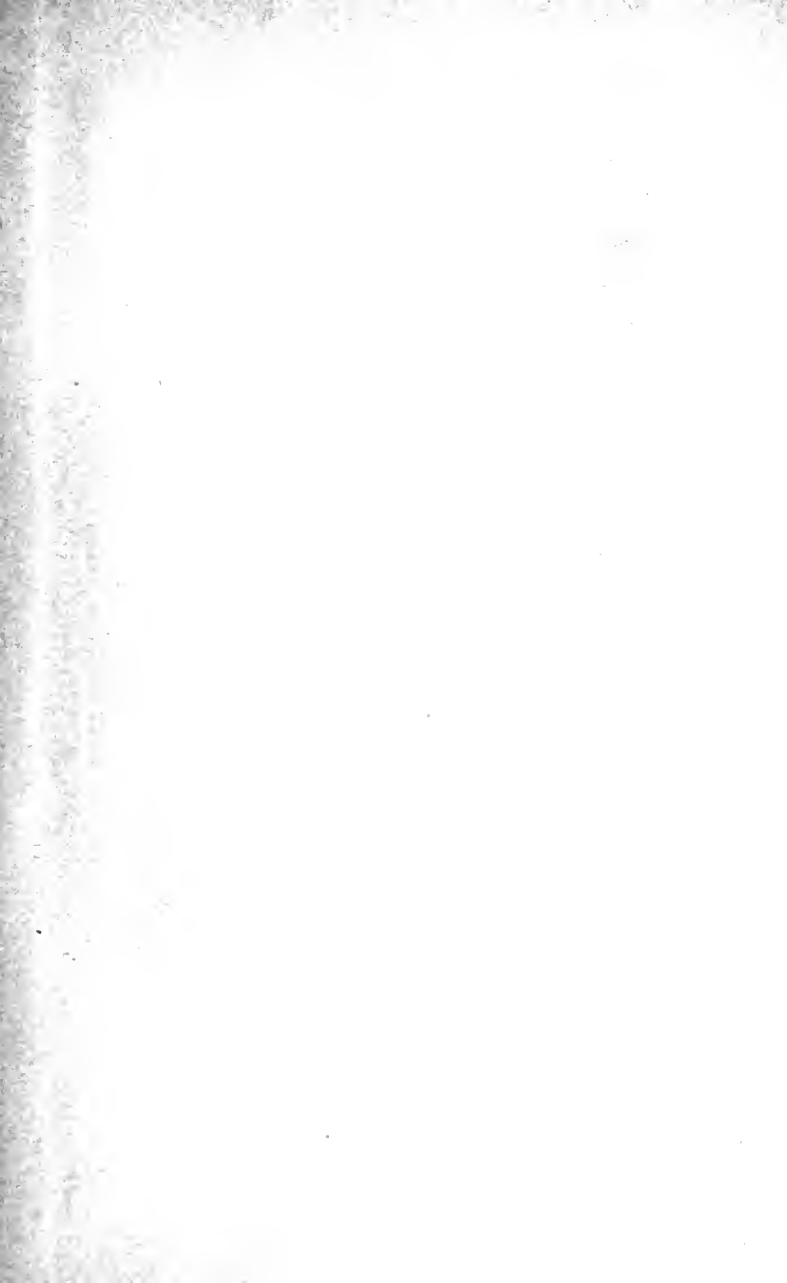
Rejoice! The harvest's home!

But, brother — thank, oh, thank the fallen bloom!

THE END







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